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OUR LORD'S LIFE ON EARTH.

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OUR LORD'S

LIFE ON EARTH

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM HANNA, D.D. LL.D.

15.C.24

VOL. IV.

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PASSION WEEK

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I.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM—JESUS WEEPING OVER THE CITY.[1]

Sunday.

THE road from Jericho to Jerusalem, as it winds up the eastern slopes of Olivet, passes close by the village of Bethany. From the village a footpath runs up to the top of the Mount, and thence down a steep declivity into the ravine of the Kedron. This being the shortest, may have been the path ordinarily taken by the villagers when going on foot to and from Jerusalem. It was not the way that any rider, not the way that the caravans of Passover pilgrims coming up from Jericho, would choose. They naturally would take the somewhat longer,

[1] Matt. xxi. 1-11; Mark xi. 1-11; Luke xix. 29-44; John xii. 12-18.

but much better and more level road, which runs round the southern shoulder of the ridge as it shelves down toward the Mount of Offence. The single circumstance that, on the occasion now before us, Jesus rode into the city, might of itself have led us to believe that it was by the latter road he went. Still further confirmation of this meets us as we enter into the details of the short but ever memorable procession.

The quiet day of Sabbatic rest at Bethany is over. Released from its restraints, visitors may now freely pass from Jerusalem to Bethany. Of this freedom numbers avail themselves, and the village is crowded. It is understood that at some time in the course of the day—the first day of the week—Jesus means to go into the city. During the forenoon the tidings of this intention are widely circulated. It was now but four days to the Passover, and the crowds of pilgrims, requiring as they did a day or two of preparation, have nearly all arrived. In and about Jerusalem between two and three millions of people[1]—more

[1] Josephus estimates the numbers present on a Passover occasion at about three millions, little short of half the population of the

than a third of the entire population of Judæa and Galilee—are assembled. The town itself is unable to afford accommodation to all the strangers. The environs all around are studded with booths and tents. The side of Olivet that looks toward the city, not the least favourite suburb, along which the road from Jericho descends, is covered with these temporary erections. In the afternoon Jesus leaves the village and joins the companies coming up from the valley of the Jordan. The road winds southward for a short distance out upon a ledge of the mountain, from the top of which is caught a distant view of a part of Mount Zion lying outside the walls, the great city itself being concealed. At this point, immediately before and beneath the traveller, there is a deep hollow running up into and dying out upon the hill side, to avoid descending into which the road takes first a sudden bend to the right, till it reaches nearly to the top of the ravine, and then turns again to the left, to traverse the opposite spur of the mountain. Pausing for

two provinces. The number of lambs slain is stated to have been 256,500.

a moment at this spot, Jesus sees 'over against' him, across the hollow, the village of Bethphage.[1] Calling two of his disciples he bids them go by the short cut across the valley over to the village, and bring an ass and a colt that they would find there, and to have them ready upon the road running near to Bethphage by the time that he and the rest of the disciples have made the round by the head of the hollow.[2] The disciples listen with wonder to these instructions. It is but a short distance into the town—an hour's walk, or less; it cannot be through weariness that Jesus wishes to have an ass to ride upon. He had seldom if ever before used this mode of travelling, one not having any

[1] The description of the text is derived from a minute personal examination of the localities. Upon the spot where in that description the village of Bethphage is represented as standing, tanks and foundations were perceived, the undoubted evidences of the former existence of a village. The site is the same, I presume, as the one assigned to the village by Dr. Barclay in the *City of the Great King*. It fully and minutely answers, as I have endeavoured to indicate, all the requirements of the narrative.

[2] As usual, the narrative of St. Mark is characterized by the mention of minute particulars, such as the finding of the colt 'by the door without, in a place where two ways met.' St. Mark may have received his information from St. Peter, who may have been one of the two sent across the valley by Christ.

special dignity in our eyes, but one that highest dignitaries in the East, kings and princes, prophets and priests, might not unsuitably, upon the most important occasions, make use of. Can it be that the hour so long waited for has come? Can it be that Jesus is about to throw off his disguise, assume his regal rank and character, and enter the capital as the King of the Jews? As they move on, groups of pilgrims coming out from Jerusalem meet them by the way. To them they tell the orders Christ has given—tell the hopes that are rising in their hearts. The excitement spreads and deepens. They meet the asses by the way. It is the colt, the one upon which no man yet had sat, that Jesus chooses. They cast their garments on it, and set him thereon. They hail him as their Messiah, their King. He does now what he never did before: he accepts the title, he receives the homage. All is true, then, that they had been thinking and hoping. It is openly and avowedly as Christ their King that he is about to go into Jerusalem.

Then let all the honours that they can give

him be bestowed. It is but little of outward pomp or splendour they can throw around this regal procession. They cannot turn the narrow mountain-path into a broad and covered roadway for their King, but they can strip off their outer garments, and cast them as a carpet beneath his feet. They can cut down leafy branches from the olive-trees and strew them in his way. Royal standards they have none to carry, they have no emblazoned flags of victory to wave. No choice instruments of music are here, through which practised lips may pour the swelling notes of joy and triumph, but they can pluck the palm-tree branches (Nature's own emblems of victory) and wave them over his head, and they can raise their voices in hosannas round him. He allows all this, receives it all as seemly and due. The spirit of exultation and of triumph expands under the liberty and sanction thus given. Swelling in numbers, freer and more animated in its expressions, the procession moves on till the ridge of the hill is gained, and the city begins to open to the view. The mighty multitude breaks out into acclamations of praise;

those going before and those following after vie with one another, and fill the air with their hosannas,--applying to Jesus, and this entry into Jerusalem, passages that all understood to relate to the Messiah. 'Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest, blessed be the King, and blessed be the kingdom of our father David; peace in heaven and glory in the highest.' Some Pharisees who are looking on and listening press through the crowd, and speaking to Jesus as one who must know and feel how misplaced and how perilous his public acceptance of such homage as this must be, would have him stop it. 'Master,' they say to him, 'rebuke thy disciples.' 'I tell you,' is his reply, 'that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.'

Down the sloping path the procession moves. A ledge of rock is reached, looking from which across the valley of the Kedron the whole city lies spread out before the Saviour's eye.[1] The sight arrests him; the procession stops. All

[1] See Dr. Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 191

around is light and joy and triumph. But a dark shadow falls upon the Saviour's countenance. His eyes fill with tears. He beholds the city, and he weeps over it. Another Jerusalem than the one sitting there at ease, clothed in holiday attire, busied with her Passover preparations, is before his eye,—a Jerusalem beset, beleaguered, crouching in fear and terror, doomed to a terrible destruction. How little power has the present over the mind and heart of Jesus! What cares he for this adulation of the multitude, this parade of praise? Even had it all been genuine, all the outburst of an intelligent faith, an enthusiastic attachment to him in his true character and office, it had not checked the current of thought and feeling within the Saviour's heart. But he knows how hollow it all is, how soon it will all die away. He thinks of the future; but of what future? Why was it not the future of the next few days? Why did the scenes that were then before him not call up that future? There before him lay the garden of Gethsemane; there, across the valley, outside the city walls, the hill of Calvary; there, in the midst of the

lofty buildings that crowned the heights of Zion and Moriah, rose the dwellings of the high priest and the palace of Herod; and he who is now looking upon these places knows well that before another Sabbath dawns he would be lying in agony in that garden, that beneath these roofs he would be jeered at and spit upon, and mock emblems of royalty forced upon him—the sentence of condemnation ratified by the fiendish cries of the city multitude: 'Away, away with him! crucify, crucify him!' and that there, upon the hill of Calvary, he would have to die the death of the cross. It had been no disparagement to the humanity of Jesus had the sights then before his eyes brought up before his thoughts the sufferings and the death with which so soon they were to be associated. But there is a higher reach of self-forgetfulness here than that of deadness or indifference to the acclamation of the surrounding multitudes. Jesus puts aside the prospect of his own endurances, though so near and so dark. He looks over and beyond them. Without naming the city, yet, by some glance of the eye or motion of the hand making clear the reference of his

words as he stands weeping, he exclaims: 'If *thou* hadst known, even *thou*,' thou upon whom for so many ages so much of the divine goodness has been lavished, whose gates the Lord has loved more than all the dwellings of Jacob, within whose holy Temple for so many generations the smoking altar and the bleeding sacrifice without, and the glimmering light of the Shekinah within, have spoken of a God there waiting to be gracious,—if thou, even thou, with all thy crowded sins upon thee, thy stoning of the prophets and casting forth of those that were sent to thee,—if thou at least, at last, in this thy day, when, all his other messengers rejected, the Father has sent forth his own Son to thee, saying, Surely they will reverence my Son,—if thou in thy day hadst known the things belonging to thy peace spoken so often, so earnestly by him.'

'If thou hadst but known.' The sentence is cut short. For a moment the bright vision rises of all that Jerusalem might have been had she but known the time of her visitation. Had she but owned and welcomed her Messiah when he

came, then might she have sat as a queen among all the cities of the earth. And he whom she honoured would have honoured her so as to cast all her former glory into the shade. Then, without her hands being steeped in the wickedness of the deed, or any hands of wickedness being employed to do it, some fit altar might have been found or reared, and in sight not of mocking enemies, but adoring friends, might the great sacrifice have been offered up; and from Jerusalem, as from the centre of the great Christian commonwealth, might the tidings of the completed redemption have gone forth, and unto her all the glory and the honour of the nations might have been brought. All this, and more, might have been in that bright vision which for a moment rises before the Saviour's eye. But quickly the vision dissipates; gives place to one, alas! how different. 'But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days will come that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy

children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.'

The pause, the tears, the lament over the doomed city, must have produced a deep impression on those around. How little could they understand the meaning of what Christ said, or the source of the emotion he displayed. One thing was clearly shown: the absence of all anticipation on the part of Jesus of any present individual success and triumph. There was much in the manner of his reception, in the plaudits with which he was hailed, in the popular enthusiasm that had found for itself such a vent, to have impelled a mere political adventurer to take advantage of the occasion, and put himself at the head of a great national movement. How easy had it been for Jesus, had he gone in with the false ideas and expectations of the thousands then congregated in and about Jerusalem, to have got himself recognised as their leader, and to have created a commotion which there were no means at hand to allay! His thoughts are far other-

wise occupied. A sublime compassion fills his spirit, draws forth his tears, and prompts those pathetic lamentations.

We are not told what effect the strange interruption of the triumphal march produced. It must have done something to subdue the ardour, to quiet the demonstrations of the crowd. The procession, however, after the momentary pause, moves on; the hosannas abated, it may have been, but still continued. They go down into the valley, they cross the Kedron, they climb the heights on which the city stood, they enter into the nearest gate. The whole city is moved. The great bulk of the town population look askance upon this singular spectacle, far less acquainted with and less interested in Jesus than the strangers from the country.

'Who is this?' they say, as they see Jesus in the centre of the excited multitude; 'and what can all this mean?' They are told by those taking part in the procession: 'This is Jesus the prophet, of Nazareth of Galilee.' How they received the intelligence we do not know; with something of wonder we may believe, and

not a little of incredulity and dislike. The movement, however, is too deep and too extensive for any instant questioning of its character or interruption of its progress. The authorities, taken in all likelihood by surprise, do not interfere. Jesus goes up into the Temple, looks round upon all things that he saw there, and, the even-tide being now come,[1] he turns, retraces his steps, and retires, we know not how attended, to the quiet home at Bethany.

Upon the triumphal procession into the city, especially upon the tears which Jesus shed and the lamentation that he poured over Jerusalem, let us offer one or two remarks.

1. How clear the proof here given of our Lord's intimate foreknowledge of all that was afterwards to occur! Any one might have ventured on a prediction, grounding it upon what he knew of the existing relationships between the Roman power and the Jewish community, that a collision was imminent, that in that collision the weaker party would be conquered, and Jerusalem should fall; but who save he to whom the

[1] Mark xi. 11.

future was as the present could have spoken as Jesus did of the days when the enemy should cast a trench, and raise a mound, and compass it round, and keep it in on every side?

Josephus tells us how to the very letter all this was fulfilled,—how at an early stage of the four months' siege, Titus, the Roman general in command, summoned a council of war, at which three plans were discussed: to storm the city, or to repair and rebuild the engines that had been destroyed, or to blockade the city and starve it into surrender. The third was the method adopted, and by incredible labour, the whole army engaging in the work, a wall was raised, which compassed the city round and round, and hemmed it in on every side.

2. A fresh mysterious awe attaches to the tears of Jesus shed thus beforehand over Jerusalem, as we think that they were shed by him whose own hand inflicted the judgment over which he lamented. In this aspect these tears are typical, and have been rightly taken as representative and expressive of the emotion with which Christ contemplates the great spiritual catastrophe

of the ruin of lost souls. It might have been otherwise than it was with the doomed city. Had it been utterly impossible for her to have averted that calamity, had that impossibility been due, as it must have been had it existed, to Christ's own ordinance, there had been hypocrisy in his tears, in his weeping over the calamity as if it had been a curse drawn down by Jerusalem upon herself by her own acts and deeds. But the alternative had been set before the city; the things belonging to her peace had been revealed; she might have known them; it was her own fault she did not; had she known, the terrible fate had not befallen her. So it is with every lost spirit of our race. The things belonging to our peace with God have been made clearly known and openly set before us. They are ours in offer; if we will they may be ours in possession. There is no outward hindrance, no invincible obstacle whatever to our entering into that peace, nothing but our own unwillingness to be saved as Jesus desires to save us. If any of us perish, over us the Saviour shall weep as over those who have been the instruments of their own ruin.

How impressively too are we here taught that the day of grace, the opportunity of return to and reconciliation with God, has its fixed limits, narrower often than the day of life. Apparently Jerusalem's day of grace extended for years beyond the time when he uttered the words of doom, and let fall the tears of sympathy. Miracles were wrought in her streets, exhortations and remonstrances addressed to her children, but to that all-seeing eye before which the secret things of God's spiritual kingdom lie open, the things belonging to her peace were from that time hid from her eyes. The door was shut, the doom was sealed. A like event happened of old to Esau when he sold his birthright. That was the point of doom in his career, and having passed it he found no place for repentance, for changing the divine purpose regarding him, though he sought it carefully with tears. A like event happened to ancient Israel on her exodus from Egypt. The time of trial as to whether an entrance should be ministered into the land of promise closed at her first approach to the borders of Palestine; closed when the Lord sware in his

wrath that she should not enter into that rest. A like event may happen in the moral and spiritual history of any man. God's Spirit will not always strive with ours. The time may come when the awful words pass from the lips of the righteous Judge, 'Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone;'—and Providence will let the man alone; and the Word of God will let the man alone; and his own conscience will let the man alone; and the Spirit of all grace will let the man alone. It is not for us to usurp the prerogative of the Omniscient. It is not for us to affirm of any one, let his character and conduct be what it may, that he has reached or passed the mysterious point beyond which that comes true. It is not for any one to pass such sentence upon himself. But let all of us stand upon our guard, and reflect that if for months or years we have been growing colder, deader, more indifferent to spiritual things, to the unseen and eternal realities; if conscience has been gradually losing her hold and weakening in her power; if we can listen now unmoved to what once would have impressed and affected us; if we court and dally with tempta-

tions that once we would have shunned; if sins are lightly committed which once we would have shrunk from; by these and such like marks, it is apparent that our day of grace has been declining, the shadows of its evening have been lengthening out, and that if no change occur, if this course of things go on long, ere the sun of our natural existence go down, the sun of our spiritual day may have set, never to rise again.

II.

THE FIG-TREE WITHERING AWAY—THE SECOND CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE.[1]

Monday.

SPEAKING generally of the days and nights of the memorable week which preceded his crucifixion, St. Luke tells us that Jesus 'in the day time was teaching in the temple, and at night he went out and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.'[2] The other evangelists speak of his going out at even-tide to Bethany, to lodge there. Some of the nights may have been spent in the village home; some outside in the olive-gardens. If the night which succeeded his triumphal entry into the city was spent in the latter way, it may have been in solitude, in sleeplessness, in fasting, and in prayer, that its

[1] Matt. xxi. 12-17; Mark xi. 12-19; Luke xix. 45-48; John xii. 19.

[2] Luke xxi. 37.

silent watches passed. And this would explain to us the circumstance, otherwise obscure, that next morning as he returned into the city Jesus was hungry. In this condition, he saw at some distance before him, by the wayside, a fig-tree covered with leaves. It is the peculiar nature of this tree that ordinarily its fruit appears before its leaves. Showing, as it did, such profusion of leaf, the fig-tree on which the eye of Jesus rested should have had some fruit hanging on its branches. But when he came up to it, it had none. Was Christ then deceived and disappointed? Did he not know before he approached the tree that no fruit would be found upon it? If he did know, should he have appeared to cherish an expectation which he did not really entertain? In answer to these and many kindred questions which may be raised regarding the incident, it is enough to say that in his whole dealing with the fig-tree by the wayside, Jesus meant, not to speak, but to enact a parable. In such acting, the letter may, and in many instances must, be false, that the spirit and meaning may be truly and fully exhibited.

Here is a tree which by its show of leaves gives promise that it has fruit upon it. Nay more, here is a tree which steps out in advance of all its fellows,—for the time of figs, the ordinary season for that fruit ripening in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, has not yet come; here is a tree which, by the very prematureness and advanced condition of its foliage, tempts the traveller to believe that he will find there the first ripe figs of the season. It is as an ordinary traveller that Jesus approaches it, and when he finds that it has by its barrenness not only sinned against the laws of its species, and failed to profit by the advantages it has enjoyed, but in its early foliage made such a boastful and deceitful show of precedence and superiority above its neighbours, he seizes upon it as one of the fittest emblems he can find of that land and people so highly favoured, for which the Great Husbandman had done so much, which had set itself out before all other lands and peoples, and made so large yet so deceitful a profession of allegiance to the Most High. In his treatment of this tree, Jesus would symbolize and shadow forth the doom that

the making and the falsifying of these professions has drawn down upon Israel. It was in mercy that in dumb prophetic show he chose to represent this doom in a calamity visited upon a senseless tree rather than upon a human agent. He might have taken one or more of the men of whom this tree was but a type, and in some terrible catastrophe inflicted upon them have prefigured the fate of their countrymen. Or he might, as he had done not long before, when pointing to the heavy judgments impending over Judea, have taken actual instances of human suffering, such as that of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, or of the eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and employed them as emblems of the like destruction in reserve for the impenitent. Upon the very occasion now alluded to, when the first hint or obscure prophecy was given of the kind of ruin coming upon Judea, he had spoken a parable in which he had used a fig-tree as an emblem of Israel,—a fruitless fig-tree, for which a period of respite had been solicited and obtained, for which year after year

everything had been done, by digging about it and dunging it, that skill and care could suggest. That parable, however, had stopped at a very critical point. The intercession had prevailed. The barren fig-tree was to be allowed to stand, another year of trial was to be given to it. We may assume that all which the dresser of the vineyard promised would be done; but the issue is not revealed. The curtain drops as the fourth year begins. What happened at its close is left uncertain. After all this care and culture the barren fig-tree might remain barren still, and the sentence, 'Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?' come to be executed upon it. Whether it was actually to be so or not, the parable did not reveal. But now this actual fig-tree of the wayside, found so full of leaf though so empty of fruit, is taken, even as the fig-tree of the parable, to represent impenitent Israel, and in his treatment of it Jesus takes up, carries on, and completes the parable, telling what it left untold. Looking at Christ's act and deed in this light, as at once symbolic and prophetic, as stretching in its significance beyond ancient Israel, and embrac-

ing an exhibition of the result of profession without practice, show without substance in religion, let us ask ourselves upon what ground was it that our Lord's cursing of the tree was grounded, and in what did that curse consist?

The tree is condemned solely for its barrenness. It is not said of it that it showed a sickly, dwarfed, or stunted growth. It may have stood as fair and goodly a tree to look upon as any fig-tree around Jerusalem, offering as inviting an object to the traveller's eye, furnishing in outspread branches and broad green leaves as refreshing a shade. But whatever its other qualities, either for use or for ornament, it wanted this one,—it did not bear fruit. That was its fatal defect, and for that one defect the blighting words were spoken against it, and it died. The tree had failed in its first and highest office. A fig-tree is created that it may bear figs. That is its peculiar function in the physical creation, and if it fail in performing this function, it forfeits its place in that creation, it incurs the penalty of removal, it may righteously be treated as a cumberer of the earth. We men have been

created that, by being, doing, enduring what God requires us to be and to do and to endure, we may bear some fruit unto him, some fruit of that kind which can be laid up in the eternal garner. That is our allotted function in the spiritual creation, and if it remain undischarged, then by us also is our place in that creation forfeited. In our natural barrenness and unfruitfulness towards God a gracious Intercessor has been found; by him for us a period of respite has been obtained, a period in which many a gracious ministry of his providence and Spirit is operating upon us. Long and sadly may we have failed in fulfilling the great end of our creation, yet if we will but yield ourselves to these kindly and gracious influences that the Redeemer of our souls is so ready to exert, the place that we had forfeited may still be ours, seasons of richer fruitfulness may be before us on earth, and a long summer-tide of endless joy beyond. But if we fail, if we resist these influences, if we still remain barren before God, it will avail us little that we plead the harmlessness of our lives, the gentleness, the goodness, the gene-

rosity of our dispositions and conduct towards our fellow-men. Like the barren fig-tree of the wayside we stand, with much, it may be, of beauty, much of outward show, many an amiable quality in us to win human love, not without use either, contributing largely to the happiness of others, but barren towards God, fruitless in the eye of Christ, open to the doom that we may force him to pronounce and execute.

And what is that doom, as shadowed forth in the symbolic incident that we have now before us? Jesus does nothing to the barren fig-tree. No outward ministry of wrath is here employed; no axe is laid at the root of the tree; no whirlwind blast from the wilderness strips it of its leaves; no lightning-stroke from heaven is commissioned to split its solid trunk, and scorch and wither up its fruitless branches. The doom pronounced is simply this: 'Let no man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever.' The curse laid upon it was that of perpetual barrenness. For the execution of that curse it was not necessary that any kind of violence should be done to it; but it was physically necessary that all

those material agencies needed to make it a fruit-bearing tree, which had so long and so unavailingly been operating, should now cease to act. This actually takes place. The sentence passes from the lips of Jesus: 'Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever.' His ministering servants hear and hasten to carry the sentence into execution. The earth hears and yields no more nourishment to those roots; light and air, they hear and withhold from them their genial influences; the rain may fall, the dew may settle upon those branches, but not to recruit or re-invigorate. It had not profited by them as it should, and now there is taken away from it even that which it had. Poor solitary forsaken tree, cut off by that fiat of Heaven from all the supports of life and growth! See how from that moment the glossy green of the spring leaves grows dull; the branches begin to droop; the bark to crack; the whole tree to shrink and shrivel up, till next morning the passers-by see it dried up from the very roots!

And should the great Creator desire to deal with any barren human spirit as he dealt with

that barren fig-tree, what has he to do in order to punish it for its barrenness? He does not need to come forth out of his place to avenge the injury done to his great name. He does not need to grasp any instrument of vengeance, or inflict with it a single stroke; no bolt of wrath need be hurled from above, nor any hell from beneath be moved to draw the guilty spirit down into its eddying fires. No; all that God has to do is simply to pass the same doom executed upon the fig-tree. He has but to desert that spirit, to say, 'Arise, let us go hence,' and call away after him as he goes all those powers and influences that had been at work there so long and so fruitlessly, to leave it absolutely and wholly, finally and for ever, to itself. Poor solitary forsaken spirit, cut off from God, and cast adrift upon a wild and shoreless sea, with thine own vulture passions in thee, let loose from all restraint, to turn upon thee and torture thee, and prey upon thee for ever! What darker, drearier hell than that?—The soul breeding within it the worm that never dies; itself kindling the fire it cannot quench.

The sentence against the fig-tree pronounced, the elements having got from their Creator the commission to execute it, which they were not slow to do, Jesus passes on into the city and up into the Temple. He had on the preceding evening merely looked around on all that was to be seen. It was the day (the tenth of the month Nisan) on which, according to the old command, the Jews were solemnly to set apart the paschal lamb for the coming sacrifice. And Christ's object may then have simply been to present himself as the true Lamb of God, set apart from the beginning, who four days thereafter was to offer up himself in the sacrifice of the cross. At the time of that short evening visit all may have been comparatively quiet within the Temple. But now, as at an early hour he enters the court of the Gentiles, the same sights are before him that met his eyes and stirred his spirit three years before: the bustle of a great traffic, of buyers and sellers, and money-changers, all busily engaged. In reproof of such desecration, in assertion of his divine dignity and power as the Son coming to his Father's

house, with full authority to dispose of all things there as he pleased, he had at the beginning of his ministry cleansed the Temple, cast out the traffickers, overturned the tables of the money-changers—with little or no effect as it would seem, for now all the abuses are restored. The hand of the cleanser is as much needed as ever, and it is once more put forth as vigorously, perhaps more so, than before, for we detect increase of sternness both in word and deed on this occasion. But why the repetition of the act? Why begin and close the ministry in Jerusalem with such cleansing of the Temple? Though we could give no other answer to such a question, we should be satisfied with regarding this as one of the many instances in which Jesus repeated himself as he did both in speech and in action. He knew the nature on which he desired to operate. He knew how difficult it is to fix even the simplest ideas, not connected with the outward world of sense and action, in the minds and hearts of the great mass of mankind. He knew that however good the instruments might be that are used to do this (and he chose the

simplest and the best), to make the impression deep and lasting the stroke must be oft repeated; the same truth told in the same words, or illustrated by the same emblems, or symbolized by the same acts. In the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark more than a dozen instances occur of the same discourses re-delivered with scarcely any variation in the phraseology; and we may warrantably conclude that this happened far more frequently in the actual ministry of Jesus than now appears upon the face of the record. It was the same with the miracles as with the teachings of our Saviour. Twice he fed many thousands on the hill-side, and twice within the lake miraculous draughts of fishes were taken. It was in harmony with the method thus so often followed, that at the commencement and at the close of his labours in Judea, within the courts of the Temple, in presence of the priests and the rulers, he asserted by a bold and authoritative act his prophetic and Messianic character, his true and proper Sonship to the Father. In the latter case we can see a peculiar propriety in his having done so. The day before, he had

made his appeal to the people. In language borrowed from ancient prophecy, and known by all to apply to Christ their coming king, they had hailed him as their Messiah, and in his acceptance of their homage he had publicly appropriated to himself the Messianic office. It remained that he should make a like appeal to the priesthood, calling on them to recognise him as holding that high office. He did so the next day in the Temple. It was the first thing he did on entering the holy place. This was the way in which he began that brief ministry within its courts, in which his earthly labours were to close. He knew beforehand how fruitless it would be; but nevertheless the sign and token of who it was that was amongst them must be given.

The second cleansing of the courts of the Temple appears to have taken the custodiers of the holy place as much by surprise as did the first. They made no attempt to interrupt it, nor did they interfere with Jesus, in the use to which he turned the courts that he had cleansed. For he did not retire after the purification was accomplished. He remained to keep guard over the

place from which the defilement had been removed, not suffering any man to carry even a common vessel across the court, which the Jews had turned into a common city thoroughfare. He remained for hours to occupy it unchallenged; the people flocked into it, and he taught them there. They were all, we are told, very attentive to hear him, and they were astonished at his doctrine,—the citizens who had never heard him teach so before, and the Galileans, to whom the doctrine indeed was not new, but who wondered afresh to hear it spoken under the shadow of the holy place. And the teaching had its usual accompaniment: 'The blind and the lame came to him in the Temple, and he healed them' there.[1] He had wrought many miracles before in Jerusalem, but never here or never thus; never within the walls of the sanctuary; never in such a public and solemn manner, as direct attestations of his asserted kingly dignity and power. For hours he had the large outer court of the Gentiles at his command, and this was the manner in which the time and the place were employed. What a

[1] Matt. xxi. 14.

change from the morning to the forenoon occupation,—from the crowding, and the jostling, and the bargaining, and the driving to and fro of cattle, to the silent multitude hanging upon the lips of the great Speaker, or watching as one and another of the lame and the blind is brought to him to be healed! But where all this while are the priests and the Levites, the rulers and the Temple guard? They are looking on bewildered, their earlier antipathy kindled into a tenfold fervour of hate. The closer to them he comes, the more distinctly and forcibly he presses upon them the evidences of his Messiahship, it convinces them the more what a dangerous man he is, how utterly impossible it is that he can be any longer tolerated or suffered to act in such a bold, presumptuous, defiant style—the resolution they had already formed to destroy him taking firmer hold of them than ever. For the moment, however, they fear both him and the people:[1] his conduct in braving them within their own stronghold so unlike anything that they had ever fancied he would dare to do; the current of

[1] Mark xi. 18; Luke xix. 48.

popular feeling running strongly in his favour, Not that there was much outward demonstration of this feeling. It had expended itself the day before in the triumphal procession without the city gates, where all felt more at liberty. Within the area of the Temple, and under those searching, frowning looks of the scribes and the chief priests, the breath of the people is abated. Thinking of the strange tears and lamentations over the capital, of all they see and hear within the Temple, something of doubt and uncertainty, of awe and fear, has been stealing over the spirits of the ignorant multitude, which restrains them from any marked or vehement expressions of attachment. But there are little children among them who had taken part in yesterday's procession, within whose ears its hosannas are still ringing. These feel no such restraint, and in the joyous ardour of the hour and scene, they lift up their voices and fill the courts of the Temple with the cry, 'Hosanna to the Son of David.' This is more than the chief priests and scribes can bear. In their displeasure they appeal to Christ himself, saying, 'Hearest thou what they say?' wishing him, as their allies

had done the day before, to stop praises, in their ears so profane, so blasphemous. All the answer that they get is a sentence applicable to all praise that comes from the lips of childhood, cited from a psalm which is throughout a prophecy of himself, a proclamation of the excellency of his name and kingdom over all the earth: 'Have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?' Pleasant ever to the eye of Jesus was childhood, with its charm of freshness, simplicity, buoyant freedom and open ardent love and trust, and sweet ever to his ear the strains of juvenile devotion, but never so pleasant as when he saw these bands of children clustering round him in the Temple; never so sweet as when—no others left to do it—they lifted up their youthful voices in those hosannas, the last accents of earthly praise that fell upon his ear.

At the rebuke and the quotation, the baffled scribes and high priests retire, to do no more that day in the way of interruption; retire to mature their plans, to wait for the morrow, and see what it will bring forth. So closed the last day but one of the active ministry of Jesus.

III.

THE BARREN FIG-TREE—PARABLES OF THE TWO SONS AND OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN.[1]

Tuesday.

It was early on the morning of Monday, the second day of the Passion week, that Jesus pronounced the doom upon the fig-tree. The sentence took immediate effect: 'Presently the fig-tree withered away.[2] The withering, however, was not so instantaneous and complete as to attract at the moment the attention of the disciples, or the shades of evening may have wrapped the tree from their sight as they went out to the Mount of Olives. Next morning, however, returning into the city by the same path they had taken the day before, they came to the tree, looked at it, and saw that it was 'dried up from the roots.'[3] Jesus himself seems

[1] Mark xi. 20-33; xii. 1-12; Matt. xxi. 23-46; Luke xx. 1-19.
[2] Matt. xxi. 19. [3] Mark xi. 20.

scarcely to notice it, is about to pass it by. The ready spokesman, Peter, calls his attention to it, and says, 'Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away.' It is simple wonder, and nothing more, wonder at the power by which such an effect had been accomplished; which breaks out in this expression of the apostle. And he is the faithful representative of the state of feeling in the breasts of his brethren. They manifest no curiosity, at least make no inquiry as to the spiritual meaning of the incident. Their thoughts are engrossed with the singularity of the occurrence, that by a simple word spoken, without any external agency employed, so large a tree, in full leaf, should, within twenty-four hours, have shrunk up from its very roots, and should now stand before them a leafless, shrivelled, lifeless thing. Had they been in a different frame of mind, had they been wondering, not how, but why so strange a thing was done, Jesus might have spoken to them otherwise than he did. As it was, he graciously accommodates himself to the existing condition of their thoughts, by letting them know

that his word had been a word of power, because a word of strong undoubting faith, such faith as they themselves might cherish. 'And Jesus, answering, saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe; it shall be done.' In the early days of Christianity, the faith of the apostles was authorized and encouraged to take hold of the omnipotence of the Deity, and through it to work miracles. This kind of faith, in its absolute and perfect form, existed only in our Lord himself. To the power itself by which the miracles were to be wrought there was absolutely no limit, as there was none to that omnipotence which the faith was to appropriate and employ. But in actual exercise the power was to be proportioned to the faith. It was to be according to their faith that it was to be done by them, as well as in them. We accept it then as true to its whole extent, that at that time, and as to these men, there was no miracle of power needful or useful for the furtherance of

their apostolic work, which their faith, had it been perfect, might not have enabled them to accomplish. Of course we understand that that would not have been a true or intelligent faith in God which desired simply to make trial of its strength, independently of the purpose for which the power was exercised. We put aside, therefore, as quite frivolous and out of place, such a question as this: Could St. Peter or St. Paul, when their faith was strongest, have cast a mountain into the sea, or plucked up a sycamore-tree by the roots? Whatever God saw was meet to be done, the power to do that was given; and so to the very shadow of the one, and to part of the dress of the other, a wonderful efficacy was once attached. But they and all these early Christians were to know that the gift of working wonders, which sat for a season like a crown of glory upon the brow of the infant Church, was not to be idly and indiscriminately employed, and was ever to be reckoned as of inferior value in God's sight to those inward graces of the soul, in which true likeness to and fellowship with God consists.

Thus it is that from speaking of faith as putting itself forth in the working of miracles, Jesus proceeds to speak of it as expressing the desires of the heart to God in prayer: 'Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.' 'And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.' The last words are the same that he had used in the Sermon on the Mount. Comparing the two cases, however, there is something more striking in the parallel than the simple repetition of the same words. It was after his having spoken for the first time the prayer that goes by his name, that at the close—as if the one petition, 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,' had been dwelling upon his mind, and he desired to recur to it, in order to press home upon the heart the duty of forgiving others—that before passing on to another subject of his discourse, he said:

'For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.'[1] So is it here. He cannot speak of the large and limitless influence of prayer without recurring to the same idea, expressing and enforcing it in the same words. Why have the two—our forgiving others, and being ourselves forgiven—been linked thus together in such close and singular conjunction? Not that there is any other ground of the divine forgiveness than the free mercy of our God in Christ; not that by pardoning others we purchase the pardon of the Heavens; but that the connexion between the two is so constant, fixed, invariable, that neither can you ever find the humble, broken, contrite heart, which sues for mercy at the throne of grace, without finding there also the meek and gentle spirit that goes forth forgivingly towards others; nor do you ever meet with such free, full, generous forgiveness of others, as from those who have themselves partaken of the par-

[1] Matt. vi. 14, 15.

doning grace of God. He who has been forgiven that great debt, the ten thousand talents, how can he refuse to forgive the hundred pence?

The words about forgiveness were spoken in presence of the withered fig-tree. The same mysterious power, which had in this one instance been put forth to blast and to destroy, was to be conveyed to the disciples. May it not in part have been to warn them that it was in no wrathful spirit, for no malignant or destructive purposes, that it was to be wielded by them,—that in such emphatic terms they were reminded that it must ever be in a meek forgiving spirit that they should sue for the aids of the heavenly power?

The short conversation by the wayside over the walk into the city is resumed, and the Temple courts are reached, already filled, though it was yet early, with eager expectant crowds. Before beginning his work of teaching and of healing, Jesus is walking leisurely through the courts, calmly surveying all around, looking, perhaps, to see what effect his act of the preceding day has had in the way of removing the profanations of the place.

The Sanhedrim has met, a consultation has been held, it has been resolved that as a preliminary step he shall be challenged, and forced to produce and authenticate his credentials.

'As he was walking in the temple, there came to him the chief priests and the scribes and the elders,'—the three great bodies out of whom the highest council of the Jews was constituted. It is a formal deputation, in all likelihood, from this council, which now approaches and accosts him. Their question seems a fit and fair one. They are the constituted keepers of the Temple, of the only public building of the city that the Romans have left entirely under Jewish control. There has been a manifest invasion of the territory committed to their guardianship, of the offices that they alone are held competent to discharge; for who is this that, being neither priest nor Levite, nor scribe nor elder, deals with the sacred place as if it were his own? Nothing at first sight more proper or pertinent than that they should come to one acting in such a way as Jesus had done the day before, and say to him, 'By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this

authority?' We remember, however, that three years before Jesus had acted in the same way within the precincts of the Temple, and that the same men had then accosted him in the same manner. Their question then indeed had been somewhat different from what it is now: 'What sign showest thou, seeing thou doest these things?' Since then, sign after sign had been given, miracle after miracle had been wrought, proof after proof of his Messiahship had been presented. They had refused to listen and be convinced; had turned all the multiplied evidence aside, and dealt with it as if it were of no weight. And now, at the close of a period teeming throughout with answers to their first challenge, they address him as if for the first time the question as to what and who he was had to be raised. They do not, indeed, now ask for signs; they must have other vouchers. They must probe to the bottom the pretensions of this bold invader of their Temple, and draw out from him what they fondly hope will give them sufficient ground legally to condemn. They frame their queries well. They first ask

about the authority under which he acts. They know that no authority but one, that of God himself, could sanction the procedure of the Galilean. He may plead that authority; but his own bare claiming it will not suffice,—he must display his title to the possession of this authority, must tell who gave it him. Looking at the motives by which they were actuated and the sinister objects they had in view—considering, too, how full and varied were the materials already in their hands for answering their inquiry,—Jesus might have kept silence and refused to answer. He does not do this: he gives indeed no direct or categorical reply; but it would be wrong to say that he cleverly or artfully evades the question they put to him by asking them another upon a quite different subject; that he suspends his reply to them on theirs to his, so that, out of their refusal to answer, he may construct a defence of his own silence. It was not as a mere evasion of a captious challenge, as a mere method of stopping the mouths of the challengers, that 'Jesus answered and said unto them, I will ask

you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men? answer me.' Jesus refers to the baptism of John as containing within itself a sufficient reply to their inquiries. If they acknowledged it as divine, they must also recognise his authority as divine; for John had openly and repeatedly pointed to him as the Messiah, the greater than he, whose shoe-latchet he was not worthy to unloose. First, then, he must have from them a confession as to the true character of the Baptist's ministry. This they are unprepared to give. Though really and in their hearts rejecting it, they had never openly discredited John's claim to be a prophet sent by God. They had managed to keep the people in ignorance of what they thought. They had not needed to interfere to check the career of the Baptist. Herod had done their work for them in his case. John had been removed, and they were willing enough it should be thought that they participated in the popular belief. They felt at once the difficulty of the dilemma

in which the question of Jesus involved them. Should they say, as was naturally to be expected they should, that John's baptism was from heaven, Jesus would have it in his power to say, 'Why then did ye not believe him when he testified of me? If he was from heaven then so am I, my ministry and his being so wrapped together, that together they stand or together they fall.' Such was the instant use to which Jesus could turn a present acknowledgment on their part of the divine origin and authority of the Baptist's ministry, convicting them at once of the plainest and grossest inconsistency. They were not prepared to stand convicted of this in presence of the people, now stirred to intense anxiety as they watched the progress of this collision. But as little were they prepared to face the storm that they would raise by an open denial of the heavenly origin of the Baptist's mission; and so to Christ's pointed interrogation, their only answer, after reasoning among themselves, is, 'We cannot tell.' It was false; they could at least have told what they themselves believed. They could, but dared not; and so by this piece

of cowardice and hypocrisy they forfeit the title to have any other or fuller satisfaction given them as to the nature and origin of that authority which Jesus exercised, beyond that which was already in their hands. 'And Jesus answering said unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.'[1]

Scarcely prepared for having the tables turned so quickly and thoroughly upon them, the scribes and chief priests and elders stand crestfallen before the Lord. He has them now in hand, nor will he lose the last opportunity of telling them what they are, and what he knows they have resolved to do. About to pronounce over them his fearful anathemas, when all the word-battles of this troubled day are over, he will force them now beforehand to spread out with their own hands the grounds upon which those anathemas were to rest. Out of their own mouths will he condemn them. This is done by a skilful use of parable; the same kind of use that Nathan made of it when he got David to judge and condemn his own con-

[1] Mark xi. 33.

duct. 'But what think ye?' says Jesus to them, as if he were introducing a wholly new topic: 'A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented, and went. He came to the second, and said likewise; and he answered and said, I go, sir; but went not. Which of these two did the will of his father?' Little suspecting the real drift of this short and simple story, and rather relieved than otherwise by the question, as getting them out of their embarrassment and covering their fall, they say unto him at once, 'The first; the one who said he would not, yet who went.' Then came the moral and application of the tale: 'Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.' It was the treatment given to John and to his ministry that Jesus had been setting forth in the conduct

of the two sons to their father. They, the chief priests and elders of the people, were the second son; and those publicans and harlots, who repented at the preaching of the Baptist, were the first. It was bad enough to have the veil of hypocrisy behind which they had tried to screen themselves torn aside; to have their unbelief in the Baptist proclaimed upon the housetops. It was worse to have publicans and harlots preferred before them, the preference grounded upon their own verdict. But they have still more to hear, still more to bear. Jesus had been comparing them, to their great chagrin, with some of the lowest of their own times. His eye now takes a wider range. He looks back to the treatment which these men's forefathers had given to messenger after messenger of the Most High, and he looks forward to that which they, fit sons of such sires, were about to give himself; and bringing the past, the present, and the future into the picture, he tells of a vineyard well fenced, well furnished, let out to husbandmen; of servant after servant sent to receive its fruits; of one of them being beaten, another stoned, another

killed, till the owner of the vineyard having 'one son, his well beloved,' at last sends him, saying, 'They will reverence my son.' But the wicked husbandmen, when he comes, take and kill him, and cast him out of the vineyard. 'What then,' says Jesus, 'shall the lord of the vineyard, when he cometh, do unto those husbandmen?' This question is addressed to the people, and not to the chief priests and scribes, to whom, as St. Luke[1] tells us, the parable was spoken; and they, not looking perhaps beyond the simple incidents of the tale, say, 'He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others.' But why are the chief priests and the elders forced, as unwillingly they are, to remain standing there in Christ's presence with a great crowd around them? what are they thinking of this second story? what will they now say? Scarcely has Christ begun to speak of the vineyard and its fence, and its wine-press, ere Isaiah's vineyard — type, they knew, of the house of Israel—recurs to their memory; and as messenger after mes-

[1] Luke xx. 9.

senger is spoken of as despatched, what could those 'be but the prophets whom the Lord had sent unto their forefathers? Already a strong suspicion that this tale also is to be brought to bear against them has entered into their minds—a suspicion that is turned into a certainty as Christ proceeds to speak of the owner of the vineyard as a father having an only and well-beloved son, just such a son as Jesus had always claimed to be to God, and as he went on to represent the seizure and the death of that son,—the very deed that they already had resolved to do. In these husbandmen they see themselves; in their doom, whatever it may be, they see their own.

Whilst the people, then, in ready answer to Christ's question, speak out the natural verdict of the unbiassed conscience, and say, 'He will destroy the husbandmen, and give the vineyard unto others,' they, as they hear such a heavy sentence passed, almost involuntarily exclaim, 'God forbid.' Jesus looks at them as they utter this vehement disclaimer, and says: 'What is this then that is written? Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which

the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?' Christ quotes here from the 118th Psalm, a psalm familiar to the Jews as pointing throughout to their Messiah; so familiar, that it was from it that those salutations were taken by which Christ on his entry into the city had been hailed by the common people two days before, as well as those hosannas to the Son of David which the children had repeated the next day in the Temple, the echoes of which must still have been ringing somewhat unpleasantly in the ears of the chief priests and the rulers. Jesus wishes by this quotation to carry on as it were the prophecy of the parable; to show what would be the doom inflicted upon the perpetrators of that dark deed, the murder of the Father's only and well-beloved Son. That Son was to be himself the inflicter of this doom; but as he in the parable was dead, and could not be represented as a living agent, the image of the vineyard is dropped, and another is introduced, fitting in however with the other,—the rejecters of the stone being the

same with the husbandmen of the vineyard. The chief priests might have some little difficulty in seeing how it was that in speaking about the corner-stone Jesus was but carrying on the same history a step or two beyond the point at which the parable, by the necessity of its structure, had stopped. Any such difficulty was at once removed by Christ's dropping for a moment all allegory, all imagery: 'Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.'[1] They can mistake no longer; the kingdom is to be taken from them; as the occupants of the vineyard, they are to be ejected. But is this all? does this exhaust their doom? What about that doom may this new image of the stone convey? 'Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder.' First the stone is passive, suffering all kinds of rough usage to be heaped upon it, revenging itself the while for all the insults offered by causing those who offer them to

[1] Matt. xxi. 43.

stumble over it, and fall and be broken. But at last, as if invested with some inner living power, or as if lifted and wielded by some invisible but all-powerful hand, it becomes active, gets into motion, lifts itself up, and with a crushing weight descends upon its despisers and grinds them to powder. Such was Christ to that commonwealth of the Jews, to that proud theocracy of which the men before him were the head. By the Great Architect he had been laid of old in Zion, the chief foundation of the great spiritual edifice to be reared out of the ruins of the Fall. For many a generation he had been a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. All these wrongs of the past he passively had borne, and now in his own person he is to submit to reproach and suffering and death ; but the hour that was to see him exalted because of this, and proclaimed to be the head of the corner, was to see him coming also in judgment. He was to arise out of his place ; he was to pour contempt on his despisers; utter desolation was to come upon the city and people of the Jews. The stone was to fall upon it, and it was in truth a very

grinding of that land to powder, when every vestige of its ancient institutions was swept away, its people perished in multitudes, and the remnant, scattered over all the earth, was as the dust which the wind drives to and fro.

What Jesus was to the Jews, he is in a certain sense to all. Primarily and mainly, he is set before us as the one and only true and broad and firm foundation on which to build our hopes; a foundation open and easy of access, no guarding fence around it, so near that a single step is all that is needed to plant us on it, broad enough for all to stand upon, and firm enough to sustain the weight of the whole world's dependence. Such is Christ to all who go to him in humility, in simplicity, in child-like trust, resting upon him and upon him only for their forgiveness and acceptance with God. But such he may not be, he is not, to all. The very stone, so elect and precious to some, to others may be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. There before us all, in the broad highway of life, it lies. It will bear now unmoved and unprovoked any treatment that you may

give. But it shall not remain so for ever; and woe to him who, having despised and rejected it all through life, shall see it darkening above his head, descending to crush. It were better for that man that he had never been born!

IV.

THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON—QUESTION AS TO THE TRIBUTE-MONEY.[1]

Tuesday.

HAVING repelled the challenge to state and to produce the authority upon which he was acting, Jesus had addressed first to the challengers the parable of the two sons, and then to the people the parable of the wicked husbandmen. In both of these parables the conduct of his rejecters had been exposed, and the fate in store for them foretold. Yet another parable was added, intended to complete that picture of the future which Jesus would hold up before their eyes. This parable, the last addressed by our Lord to the people at large, was partly a repetition, partly an expansion of the one delivered some time before in Peræa, on the occasion of an

[1] Matt. xxii. 1-22; Mark xii. 13-17; Luke xx. 20-26.

entertainment given to Christ by a chief Pharisee, and which is recorded in the 14th chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke. It is interesting to notice the difference between the two, corresponding so accurately, as they do, with the differences of time and circumstances under which they were spoken. When the first was uttered, the hostility of the hierarchy, though deep and deadly, was latent. The certain man, therefore, who makes a supper, and sends out his servant to tell them that were bidden to come, for all things were now ready, has nothing more to complain of than that his messenger and his message were both treated with neglect. With more or less courteousness, more or less decision of purpose, more or less implied preference for other engagements, the invitation was refused. And the penalty visited upon this refusal was simply exclusion from the banquet. 'For I say unto you that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.'

In the second parable, the guilt of the first invited guests is greater, the penalty more severe. The certain man who makes a feast becomes a

king, invitations issuing from whom had all the character of commands. And it is for no common purpose that the royal banquet is prepared. It is for a great state occasion; to celebrate a great state event. Even therefore had the king's invitations met with no other or different reception from that given to the invitation of the householder, a much higher guilt had been involved in declining it; for a royal banquet made under such circumstances had something in it of a public or political character. To make light of an invitation to such a banquet, to plead any of the events or duties or engagements of ordinary life as a reason for declinature and absence, would not only be in the highest degree discourteous, it would have a taint of treason in it, an element of disloyalty and rebellion.

In the one case a single servant is sent forth, and when he tells the bidden guests to come, for all things are now ready, with one consent they begin to make excuse; but there is nothing of contempt or malignity displayed towards either the provider of the feast or the servant who bears the summons. There is an apparent desire to

make out something like a good excuse. In the second parable the king sends out not one, but a band of servants, who meet with a flat refusal. Other servants are sent forth, not to punish, not to announce the king's purpose to exclude, but to renew the invitation—to entreat the refusers to reconsider their resolution. Some make light of it, treat this second invitation with even greater disrespect than the first; while others are so provoked that they take the messengers, spitefully entreat them, and slay them. Is it wonderful that the wrath of the king should in consequence of this be so much greater than that of the simple householder; that he should treat the heavier offence with a deeper mark of displeasure than mere exclusion from his presence and his table? 'He sends forth his armies and destroys these murderers, and burns up their city.'

This bringing in of armies, this mention of a city and its destruction, at once calls up to our thoughts the ruin hovering over Jerusalem, and teaches us to connect the parable of the marriage-feast with that of the wicked husbandmen; both

intended to set forth the terrible punishment of the Jewish people—the taking of the kingdom from them, and the giving it to others. In the closing part, however, of the latter parable—that which speaks of the new guests brought in from the highways, and the king coming in and detecting the man without the wedding-garment,—it goes beyond the former; it points not to Jewish but to Christian times. And it should fix our attention all the more upon the closing section of the parable, that while in all the other teachings of our Lord during his last day in the Temple, strict regard was had to the audience that was then before him,—to the events that were so soon to transpire in Jerusalem and Judea, he casts here a prophetic glance upon the ages that were to succeed the fall of the Jewish theocracy—as if he could not pass away from his pre-intimation of the forfeiture of the kingdom by the sons of Abraham without warning those who were to be brought in to take their place, that a no less watchful eye would be upon them as they sat down at the provided banquet, that the badge of loyalty without

and the spirit of true loyalty within would be required of all, and that the want of it would incur a penalty not less heavy than that visited on their predecessors, the chief priests, the scribes, the elders.

Their wrath at the speaker knew no bounds. They would have laid hold of him and borne him off to inflict the condign punishment that in their eyes he so fully merited. But they feared the people. They were not sure of the temper of the crowd by which they were surrounded, not sure how far they would be supported by the Roman authorities. Outwardly curbing, inwardly nursing their wrath, they withdraw to try another method. They have been baffled in the attempt openly to confront him; but could they not entangle him in his talk by some crafty questions, and force from him an answer that might supply material for accusation, 'that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor?'[1] Leaving some of their underlings to watch him, so as to be ready to report all he says and does, they retire to hold a secret conclave.

[1] Luke xx. 20.

They call the Herodians into council, whom they find quite willing to combine with them in the execution of any plan that promised to prevail against the man whom they equally hate. The deliberation is brief. A step at once suggests itself that cannot but succeed, which, one way or other, is certain to damage, if not utterly to ruin, their common enemy. The chief priests, however, and scribes, and elders, the leading men who have just had that humiliating colloquy with him, will not go themselves to carry out this well-concocted scheme. They have had enough of personal collision. They will not venture again into his presence, to be taunted and maligned before the people. It is besides a very low and hypocritical piece of work that is to be done, and they commit it to other hands, who take with them some of these Herodians, to give the matter less of a purely Pharisaic character.

Having got their instructions, these emissaries approach Jesus, feigning themselves to be sincere men, bent upon ascertaining what their duty is. And when they come they say to him, 'Master,

we know that thou art true, and carest for no man, for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth,'—a very insidious piece of flattery, a great part of its power lying in the apparent honesty with which the men who offer it embrace themselves among the number of those for whom they are sure that Jesus will not care; a kind of flattery consisting in attributing to the person flattered a superiority to flattery, to which, if well administered, our weak humanity is peculiarly susceptible. With this artful preface, which they hope will tempt him to speak boldly out the answer that may suit them, they say, 'Master, is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?' It is not the expediency but the lawfulness of paying the tribute exacted by the Romans, that they ask about. That lawfulness was denied by many who, under the force and pressure of necessity, yet paid the tax. The Pharisees themselves, who owed much of their power and popularity to their faithful adherence to the principles of the old Jewish theocracy, disputed the lawfulness of the exaction. They took their

stand here upon a very plain declaration of Moses: 'Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee whom the Lord thy God shall choose; one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.'[1] When the Herodian family, one not of Jewish but of Idumean extraction, backed by the power of Rome, took possession of the throne of Judea, the entire Jewish Sanhedrim, appealing to this scripture, protested against what they rightly enough regarded as a violation of the Mosaic law. Their protest, however, was unavailing. The first two Herods were kept upon the throne by the Roman Emperors, whose policy it then was through them to rule Judea. Ere long indeed, and this happened during our Saviour's life, the mask was dropped. The sovereignty of Judea was directly assumed by the Romans. One or other of its northern provinces was given to one of the Herods, who governed it under the title of tetrarch or king; but Judea proper was placed under a Roman Procurator. Such a method of foreign rule

[1] Deut. xvii. 15.

was still more obnoxious to the Jewish people than the government of the Herods, who, though by descent Idumean, had by intermarriage with Jewish families won for themselves something like a Jewish title. It was the policy, and we have no doubt it was the honest principle, of the Pharisees secretly to foster the general and deep, but repressed and smouldering opposition to the Roman rule. Distinguished as a religious party for their extreme and punctilious attachment to the ceremonialism of the Jewish law, as a political party they won golden opinions of the people by standing in the vanguard as upholders of the national independence. Among the many political questions which the state of the country raised, was one about the payment of the poll-tax imposed by the foreign governors. Arguing from the premise that the whole foundation of the Roman authority was hollow, grounded on usurpation and incapable of defence, the leading political Pharisees vehemently denied the legality of the imposition. The Herodians, the defenders of the legitimacy of the Herodian dynasty, could not well deny the justice of the

Roman claim to civil supremacy, as it had been by the Roman power that the dynasty which they supported had been instituted. Yet among them there were many who bore no goodwill to the Italian conquerors, and who looked to the rule of the Herods as the best protection against an entirely foreign domination,—the best preservative of something like a separate and independent national existence. Such kind of Herodians perhaps they were who now associated themselves with the Pharisees in putting the question to Jesus—'Master, is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?'

They think that they have shut him up; no door seems open to evade or to decline an answer. A simple affirmative or a simple negative must be given. On either side, the difficulty and the danger to Jesus seem nearly equal. If he shall say it is lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, his favour with the people is gone; his pretensions to be the Messiah are scattered to the winds; from being an object of attraction and

attachment he becomes an object of alienation and contempt. Should he, on the other hand, say, as they fondly hope he will, that it is not lawful, the weapon is at once put into their hands which they can use against him with fatal effect. They have but to report him to Pilate as a stirrer-up of sedition, and prove their charge by his own declaration made in the presence of the people. But they are not prepared for the manner in which the insidious question is to be dealt with. 'Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?' said Jesus; 'show me a penny,'—the coin in common circulation. There were two kinds of money at that time in use among the Jews,—the Roman, by which all the common business of life was transacted, and in which the capitation-tax, about which the question that had been raised, was paid; and the old Jewish, still partially employed, and in which especially the Temple tax was paid. They bring him one of the Roman coins—a denarius. He looks at it and says, 'Whose image and superscription is this?' They say to him, 'Cæsar's.'

He says to them, 'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.'

By this singular and short reply the hypocrisy and the inconsistency of his questioners is at once exposed. The mere payment of the tribute is but a secondary matter after all. The true, the great question was, Should the Roman rule be submitted to or not? was it or was it not lawful to submit to that authority, to bear the foreign yoke? This question the Jewish people and these Pharisees, their most influential leaders, had suffered so far to be decided. They had yielded to, and accepted, the foreign yoke. There was this manifest token of subjection, that Roman money was circulating among them as the common and accepted coin of the realm. It was an acknowledged maxim, it had become a rabbinical proverb, that the coin of a country tells who is its king. Things being in that state in Judea, it was an idle, it was a deceitful, it was a base and malignant thing, to come to Jesus and try to force from him such a decision upon that isolated point of the payment

of the tax, as would involve him with the Roman authorities. Let those who thought Cæsar was a usurper, and were prepared to cast off his authority, raise at once the standard of rebellion, and try the hazard of a civil war. Let those who, holding the existing government to be illegitimate, thought at the same time that matters were not ripe for open resistance, bide their time, and mature their measures as well and as secretly as they pleased; but let not any, like these Pharisees and Herodians, while fawning upon the Roman governor, and forward in all the outward expressions of submission, pretend to have any difficulty about the payment of the tax; above all, let them not, while trying to keep up their own power and popularity by letting it be understood that they sympathized with the people in their opposition to the foreign rule, try to inveigle one who from the first had stood aloof and declined to take any part whatever in the political dissensions of the country, so as to accuse him to the governor, and have him condemned and executed for that which, neither in their own eyes, nor in that of the

great majority of their fellow-countrymen, was accounted as a crime.

Coupling it with his demand for a sight of the Roman coin, and his pointing to the image and superscription stamped thereon, I have no doubt that those of Christ's auditors would have been right who interpreted the first part of Christ's answer, 'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,' as implying that it was lawful to pay the tribute-money; right and consistent,—so long as Cæsar or any one was acknowledged as king, and the money from his mint taken and employed,—that the tribute levied by him should be paid; the duty of obedience springing from the fact of the existing dominion. But there can be as little doubt that those also of that audience would have been right who interpreted the second part of Christ's answer, 'Render to God the things that are God's,' as carrying with it a severe and most merited rebuke of his questioners. For had they but fulfilled that acknowledged obligation, had they been but true to the spirit and laws of their own ancient government, no Roman soldier had ever invaded their borders,

no Roman governor had sat in the Hall of Judgment at Jerusalem. It was their own failure in rendering to God the things that were his, a failure of which Pharisees and Herodians had alike been guilty, which had reduced their country to bondage; and now to be wrangling about the narrow question of the payment of the tribute, what was it but as if the men who by some act and deed had exposed themselves to the infliction of a certain penalty, were to sit down and discuss on abstract grounds the legitimacy of the authority by which that penalty was exacted?

Considering Christ's answer in its immediate bearings upon those who then stood before him, it is not difficult to see how completely it availed to silence his questioners, and to put it out of the power of any of the parties there represented to turn it against him. They could but marvel at him, and hold their peace.

But separating this memorable saying of Christ from the particular circumstances under which it was uttered, and the immediate object it was intended to subserve, let us look at it as an aphorism of infinite wisdom, thrown into that

proverbial form that gives it so easy and so strong a hold upon the memory, promulgated for the universal guidance of mankind. 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; unto God the things that are God's.' Both precepts may and ought to be obeyed. There need not be, there ought not to be, any discord or collision between them. Christ would not have imposed the double obligation had there been any natural or necessary conflict between the two. Each may be met and fully satisfied, the other being left entire and uninvaded. It ought never to keep a man from rendering all due obedience to his earthly sovereign, that he is faithful in his allegiance to him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. It ought never to keep him from serving aright his Heavenly King, that he has an earthly one to whom all honour and obedience are due. It would be to misinterpret altogether the golden rule of Christ, to regard it as if it set before us two masters, both of whom we were called to serve, the one having authority in one region and over so much ground, the other having authority over a quite different region and within quite

different limits, whose claims might occasionally become competing and conflicting. In rendering to Cæsar the things that righteously are Cæsar's, we can never be keeping from God the things that righteously are God's. And if the things that are God's be duly and fully rendered, Cæsar shall get what is his as one of the very things that God requires at our hands. The second precept, in fact, embraces the first as the greater covers the less.

Let it, however, be at once acknowledged, that rich and full of wisdom as the saying of our Lord is, it appears to fail in application; for is not, it may be said, the very point upon which we especially need guidance, left by it vague and undecided? What are the things that are Cæsar's? What are the things that are God's? How far in each case can and may we go? Where in each case ought we to stop? A line of demarcation it is thought there must be here between the two sets of obligations, the two kinds of duty and of service. But the adage does not help us to lay it down. Now, strange as it may appear, it is the very absence of any such precise and definite

directory as the one thus craved for, its careful avoidance of drawing any separating line between our civil and political duties on the one hand, and our religious ones on the other, which, to our view, stamps it with the signature of a wisdom that is divine. Christ does not define what we are to do, or what we are to refuse to do, in order to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. No; but he gives us to understand that these never can be, or at least never ought to be, such as to interfere in the slightest degree with the higher duty we owe to God. He does not define what we are to do, or what not to do, in order to render to God the things that are his. No; but he gives us to understand that these never are or can be such as to interfere in the slightest degree with the dutiful obedience that we owe to kings and to all that are in authority over us. We are not, under the cloak of being faithful to Cæsar, to become disobedient to God. We are not, under the cloak of being obedient to God, to be unfaithful to our earthly ruler. And if, with equal singleness of eye, equal purity of motive, we make it equally a matter of conscience to keep both the precepts that he has

linked together, no discord shall arise, no need of dividing lines be felt. I believe it to be impossible logically to define, so as absolutely to distinguish from one another, our social and political duties from our religious ones. To look only at a single section of the wide domain. When Church and State have come into conflict, the attempt has always failed, I believe must ever fail, to mark off the boundary-line between them, and to say exactly and all along the line where the authority of the one ends, and that of the other begins. Collisions, unhappily, have arisen. The past is full of them: no darker chapters in the history of our race than those in which the record of these conflicts is preserved. But how has this come about? From kings becoming tyrants; from their forgetting that they, and all their subjects along with them, should render to God the things that are God's; which cannot be done unless the rights of the individual conscience be respected, and each man left free to believe and worship as that conscience dictates: -from priests becoming kings, from their forgetting that Christ's kingdom is not of this world,

and that it was never meant to be so administered as to call in the aids of earthly power—to use those instruments which earthly sovereigns are alone entitled to employ.

On both sides here the deepest wrongs have been done, the foulest crimes committed. The august name of royalty has been abused, to trample upon the still more sacred rights of conscience. It was abused when the proud monarch of Babylon raised the golden image in the plain of Dura, and issued his order that all people and nations should worship it; it was abused when Darius signed the writing and issued the decree that no man should present any petition to God or man for thirty days, but to himself; it was abused when the rulers of the Jews summoned Peter and John before them, and straitly charged them that they should speak no more of Jesus to the people; it was abused when the Emperor of Germany called Martin Luther before the Diet, and commanded him to retract the faith that he had derived from the sacred oracles; it was abused when the Stuarts prescribed to the Covenanters of Scot-

land the manner in which they were to worship God, treated all who refused compliance with their ordinances as rebels against the throne, persecuting them even unto death. We cannot count Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the apostles of our Lord, Luther, the Scottish Covenanters, as violators of the precept, 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,' because at cost or peril of their lives they heroically resolved to obey God rather than man.

The sacred name of religion has also been abused. It was abused when Cromwell taught his men to see in their enemies the enemies of the Lord, and claimed the divine sanction for all the slaughter effected by the swords of his Ironsides; it was abused when he who arrogated to himself the title of God's vicegerent upon earth, raised himself above all earthly sovereigns, took it on him to sit in judgment upon their titles to their crowns, dethroned princes at his pleasure, and released subjects from allegiance to their lawful kings. It was still more awfully abused when spiritual offenders against the Church—those who believed not as she

would have them to believe, worshipped not as she would have them to worship—were treated as criminals, to be punished by the sword, and the civil power was called on to enforce the spiritual sentence, and many a dungeon witnessed the torture, and many a death-pile was raised, and many a martyr-spirit was chased up through the fires to its place beneath the altar.

Fanatics on the one hand, and despots on the other, have sadly traversed the Saviour's golden rule, and in doing so have only taught us how difficult a thing it is for weak humanity, when under the blinding influence of prejudice and passion, to bear in mind the double precept of our Lord: 'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's: to God the things that are God's.'

V.

QUESTION OF THE SADDUCEES AS TO THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.[1]

Tuesday.

BAFFLED and exposed by Christ's answer as to the payment of the tribute-money, the Pharisees retire. And now their great rivals, the Sadducees, take the field, and try to entangle Jesus in his talk. Though constituting a powerful party, it is not till the closing scene of the Saviour's life that the Sadducees appear to have taken any active part against him. It was alien from their disposition to interfere with any popular religious movement till it took such shape as made it in their eyes dangerous to the state, and then they did not scruple summarily to quench it. They looked with a haughty contempt upon what they regarded as the groundless beliefs and idle super-

[1] Matt. xxii. 23-33; Mark xii. 18-27; Luke xx. 27-40.

'stitious practices of the great bulk of their countrymen. In common with them they believed indeed in the divine origin of the Jewish faith, restricted as they took that faith to be mainly to the announcement that there was but one God, the God of Israel, in opposition to all idolatry. They admitted the divine authority of the laws and institutions of Moses, whom they especially honoured as their great heaven-sent and heaven-instructed lawgiver. But they rejected the whole of that oral tradition which had grown up around the primitive Mosaic revelation, which had come generally to be regarded, and was especially defended by the Pharisees, as of equal authority with it. They accepted the other books of the Old Testament as well as the Pentateuch, but there seems good reason to believe that they held the latter in peculiar and pre-eminent esteem. In their interpretation of the Pentateuch they adhered rigidly to the letter, rejecting all the false glosses and elaborate explanations and inferences which the Pharisaic Rabbis had introduced. Into their religious creed the Sadducees would admit nothing which Moses had not directly and unam-

biguously announced. True to their character as the freethinkers or rationalists of their age and nation, they were incredulous as to any other existences or powers influencing human affairs beyond those that lay open to the observation of their senses. They did not—as professed disciples of Moses they could not—repudiate the agency of God as exerted in the creation and government of the world. But they limited that agency to a general supervision and control which left full scope to human volition and human effort, which they regarded as the chief factors in the unfolding of events. So far as their professed faith would let them, they were materialists. They acknowledged the existence of one great Spirit. They could not deny that beings called angels had occasionally, in the early times whose history was recorded by Moses, appeared to take some part in earthly affairs. But, disbelieving in the existence of any other spirit save that of the Supreme, whatever their explanation of these angelic manifestations, it was one that left them at liberty to deny, as they did, that there was any permanent and

separate order of beings called angels standing between men and God. They said that there was 'no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit.'[1] They believed in the soul of man only as exhibited in and by the body which enshrined it; with that body it perished at death. The future state, a world of rewards and punishments hereafter for the things now done in the body, was but a dream. To speak of the resurrection of the body at some after period was a solecism. There was no spirit for it to be re-united with. It might please God, out of the materials that had once formed one human body, to make another like it, and to plant in it another soul; but there was, there could be, no real resurrection of the dead, no rising to life again of the same beings that had been buried. If such a thing could be, and were actually to take place, the beings so raised would return (as they imagined) to the same kind of life as that which previously had been theirs; and from the very absurdities and contradictions which would be implied in this, they drew many an argument

[1] Acts xxiii. 8.

against the popular belief in a resurrection, which those adhering to that belief, holding it as they did in a very gross and materialist fashion, were unable to meet.

How did such men look upon Jesus Christ? Perhaps in the first instance as a weak but harmless enthusiast, little worth their notice, or worth only a smile or a scoff. His teaching, so far as it was reported to them, or they knew anything about it, was utterly distasteful to them; it was animated by a spirit totally the reverse of theirs; it was full of faith in the invisible. In it the spiritual, the future, the eternal, not only enwrapped but absorbed the present, the temporary, the sensible. God was no longer a mere name for a remote and inaccessible Being, who sat aloof upon a throne of exalted supremacy. He was the Father, continually engaged in guiding, protecting, providing; clothing the lilies of the field; feeding the fowls of the air; causing his sun to shine; sending his rain from heaven; caring for all the creatures of his power, all the children of his love. No thought was to be taken for the body as compared with that which should

be taken for the soul. The world beyond the present stood out in vivid perspective and relief. The angels of God were represented as rejoicing there over each sinner that repented on earth, and the spirits of the dead as waiting to welcome each brother spirit as it passed up to its place beside them in the heavens.

How the Sadducees regarded the miracles of our Lord it is difficult to say. They would regard his feeding of the hungry and his curing of the diseased either as impositions, or exercises of some occult power of which he had become possessed. But when he pretended to cast out devils and to raise the dead, his miracles came into direct collision with their unbelief, and awakened more than incredulity—stirred up malignity. He was in their eyes a base and bad man who could thus deceive the people. If he would prove that he came from God, let some sign direct from God be given. The only occasion on which, during the course of our Saviour's ministry, the Sadducees interfered with him, was when they once joined the Pharisees in demanding from him a sign from heaven. They got

signs enough, some of them wrought under their own eyes, as in the healing of the man born blind, and in the raising of Lazarus, but signs which only increasingly exasperated them, so that when they saw that the movement created by Jesus was assuming politically so threatening an aspect, they were quite willing at last to league with the Pharisees, and assist in removing him; for it was better, so said one of themselves, that one man should die than that the whole nation should perish. Parties to the recent resolution come to by the Sanhedrim, the Sadducees were watching with as jealous eyes as the Pharisees all that was taking place in the courts of the Temple. Though conspiring with them in their design, it may have been with some degree of secret complacency that they noticed how in the word-battle about the tribute-money he had foiled the rival sect. They have a question of their own, however, with which, as they fancy, he will find it more difficult to deal; one with which they had often pressed their adversaries, and to which they had never got any satisfactory reply. They will see how Jesus will deal with it. If

he agree with them, then adieu to his power with the people; if he fail to answer, what a triumph both over him and all credulous believers in a resurrection!

They state their case and propose their query. Moses had commanded that if a Jew died childless, leaving a widow, his brother should marry her, and had ruled that the child of the second marriage should be reckoned as the heir of the brother predeceased. There were seven brothers, they told Jesus, who all died, each having been successively the husband of the same woman; and last of all the woman died: 'in the resurrection, therefore,' they say to him, very confidently—somewhat coarsely and contemptuously,—'whose wife shall she be of the seven?' Christ's answer is direct and emphatic. 'Ye do err,' he says, 'not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.' His charge against them is not one of hypocrisy, but of error, of wrong belief, that error having a twofold source: (1.) Their ignorance of the meaning of the Scriptures, of that very book of Moses from which they had quoted; (2.) Their ignorance of the power of God, of the manner of its exercise

generally, and, more particularly, of the way in which it should be exercised in effecting that resurrection which they denied. Taking these sources of error in inverse order, Jesus first unfolds wherein their error as to the power of God consisted. They looked upon it too much as a mere force, illimitable indeed, yet fixed, unvarying, working now as it had ever done before, to work hereafter even as it was working now. They failed to recognise it as the forthputting of the energy of a living Being who was ever thereby embodying his will, expressing his purposes, executing his plans;—the very same error as to the power of God which lies at the root of a large part of our modern infidelity, traceable, as it easily is, up to a denial of the personal agency of a Being who has plans and purposes and a will of which the whole creation is but a constant and gradual development. But, still more particularly, the Sadducees had erred in limiting the future manifestation of the power of God, in imagining that if the dead were to rise again, they were to live subject to the same conditions, united to each other by the same relationships

with those that now exist. Prior to the Incarnation, very little beyond the bare fact that there was to be a resurrection of the dead had been revealed. Had any right conceptions of the character and power of the great Creator been entertained, preparing the mind that entertained them for an endless variety in the future as we now know that there has been in the past, the very nature of the fact, apart from all further information about it, that there was to be hereafter a general resurrection of the dead, should have stifled in the birth such an idle objection as that which these Sadducees were urging; for, come how it might, let it be attended with whatever other outward changes in the physical condition of our globe, it was in itself a change too great to allow of any ideas borrowed from the present condition of things being transferred to that new state of which it must form the initial stage. But Jesus goes a step further than this: he puts his hand forward partially to lift the veil, and tell somewhat of the nature and the extent to which these changes will be carried which the resurrection will involve. 'And Jesus, answer-

ing, said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.'[1] This much is told us here, that great changes are in store for us; that out of the grave a new economy is to arise, elevated in all its conditions and relationships above that under which we now dwell. But how much also remains untold; how much to check that prurient curiosity with which we are tempted to pry into the future, and extort from it its secrets!

We have got in the Bible two brief sketches which none but the finger of God could have drawn, a sketch of the beginning and a sketch of the end of the world as it now is. The one, the picture of the past, the story of the creation, how very difficult has it been for us to decipher it; how slowly are we spelling out its meaning; how much of it still remains obscure; how utterly

[1] Luke xx. 34-36

should we have failed in interpreting it aright, had it not so happened that, in these later years, we have got access to other records, also somewhat dim as yet, which the events as they occurred stamped enduringly upon the solid rocks. Now if the scriptural picture of the past was so dark and so difficult to understand, was in our hands so long misunderstood and misinterpreted, how can we expect it to be otherwise with the scriptural picture of the future, which tells of a coming epoch more unlike the present than is the present to any epoch of the past? How wise then and becoming for us, till the events occur that shall yield the true interpretation, to confine ourselves to the simple and general truths that lie upon the face of those figurative descriptions of the future state which abound in the Bible, and which ought never to be treated as literally and historically true. How vain to use what were meant only to be obscure hints, as stepping-stones from which fancy may safely mount and soar away at random. Let us be satisfied with the little that we can now know. It doth not yet appear what we shall be. We see but through a

glass darkly, nor will any straining of our eyeballs make clearer that cloudy medium through which alone we are permitted to gaze. Standing with that wonderful future before us, on which our eye cannot but often and eagerly be fixed, there is happily for us another and a better occupation than that of filling the void spaces with forms and colours of our own creation. Children of that coming resurrection we all must be. No mountain shall have breadth enough to cover us, no ocean depth enough to hide us, when once the imperial summons soundeth, 'Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment.' But children of a blessed resurrection, of the resurrection unto life, we can only be by becoming now the children of God. Let that be our present, our steadfast aim; let that goal be reached, and then let us rest quietly in the assurance that, raised with Christ, we shall be sharers of his immortality, shall die no more, but be as the angels which are in heaven.

The error of the Sadducees as to the power of God having been exposed, Christ proceeds to notice their error as to the Scriptures: 'As touching the dead that they rise; have ye not read in

the book of Moses?'[1] Among the Jews, down till near the times of Christ, the first five books of our Bible formed but one book, written continuously on one roll of parchment. It is out of this book, called ordinarily the Book of the Law, that he quotes a sentence in proof of the resurrection. He might have cited other ampler and much clearer testimony from other parts of the sacred Scriptures, especially from the Psalms and the books of Job, Daniel, and Hosea; but he is dealing now with the Sadducees, and he takes the passage from the same writings to which they had themselves appealed. 'Have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.'[2] The link that binds here the premise to the conclusion is anything but apparent at first sight. The inference seems neither natural nor necessary. Does God's calling himself the God of the departed patriarchs of itself prove that these patriarchs

[1] Mark xii. 26. [2] Mark xii. 26, 27.

were still living? Is this not the simple and only meaning of the passage quoted, that he who had been the God of the fathers would be the God of the children? Even granting that the continued existence of those, of whom God spake as being still their God, was to be legitimately inferred from the expression cited, what proof was involved in that of their resurrection? Might the soul not live though the body were left for ever in the grave? In answer to such questions, let it be noted that Christ's reply to the Sadducees was evidently rather general than specific—cut at the root of their unbelief rather than at the particular branch of it pressed on his regard. These men were unbelievers in the resurrection of the body, because they were unbelievers in the immortality of the soul. The two were so connected in their regards that they stood or fell together. Prove to them the one, the major proposition—that the soul survived the dissolution of the body,—and you cut away the ground upon which their rejection of the other rested. Establish the fact that Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob were still living when God spake of them as he did to Moses

from the bush, and you overturned the foundation of their infidelity. And this is what Jesus does, not so much by argument, as by his own authoritative declaration that there lay in the phrase, 'I am the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,' a depth of meaning that the Sadducees had failed to penetrate,—that it was nothing short of an announcement that the relationship in which God stood to these departed patriarchs was so peculiar, so close, so gracious, as to preclude the possibility of either soul or body ever finally perishing, as to involve at once the immortality of the one and the resurrection of the other. We would be ready at once to acknowledge that, had Christ not put this meaning upon the phrase, had he not furnished us with this key for the unlocking of its full significance, it would not have appeared to us necessarily to have involved the inference that is drawn from it. But let us be equally ready to accept the interpretation of it that he has given. We would do so even though the links that bound the premise to the conclusion remained obscure; but we lay this brief compendious argument in favour of

the resurrection alongside that expanded proof which St. Paul unfolds in the 15th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and light begins to dawn upon it.

The idle question of the Sadducees was much akin in character, owned the same spiritual pedigree, with that dealt with by the apostle: 'But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?' As Jesus met the query put to him about the woman and her seven husbands, by telling his questioners that they utterly mistook the nature of the changes that the resurrection was to bring with it, for in that world it was to usher in, there was to be neither marrying nor giving in marriage; so Paul met the questioners of his day by telling them that they too had fallen into the like mistake of confounding the future with the present; that it was not to be the same body that was buried which was to rise, but one as different from it as the seed that rots beneath the sod is from the stalk of wheat that issues from it; that flesh and blood could not inherit the kingdom of God; that the natural was to be changed into the spiritual, the corrupt-

ible into the incorruptible, the terrestrial into the celestial. And just as Christ deduces from the covenant relationship in which God stood to the patriarchs the preservation of their entire being, and the clothing it with a deathless immortality, even so from the relationship in which Jesus stands to all who are in vital union with him, does the Apostle draw the very same conclusion. In taking their nature on him, in bearing their sins, in dying that they might live, Jesus took their whole humanity and wound it round him, and so identified it with his own being and estate, that as in him they live, with him they must rise again, his life involving theirs, his resurrection involving theirs. Mysterious incorporating union with Jesus Christ! that begins with the simple act of trust and love which binds our weak and sinful spirit to our Redeemer, and brings us into such close and hallowed fellowship with God, that we can hear him say to us, 'I am thy God, even as I was the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and of the faithful in all ages!'—what a linked array of untold incalculable benefits and blessings does it carry in its train! This among the rest, that, by

passing them through the corruption of the grave, he shall change these bodies of ours and make them like to his own glorious body; and associate them as meet companions of the purified spirits that he shall exalt to the glories and services and blessedness of heaven. Dead by nature as we all are in our sins, let us so embrace Him who is the resurrection and the life that we shall be quickened together with Christ, raised up together with him through faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead. 'For if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness; and if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.'

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VI.

THE LAWYER'S QUESTION—THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS—CHRIST, DAVID'S SON AND DAVID'S LORD.[1]

Tuesday.

PHARISEES, Herodians, Sadducees have each in turn been foiled in their assaults. Jesus has either turned aside the edge of their insidious questions, or has given such reply as recoils upon the questioners. Among the auditors who are standing by whilst this questioning is going on, there is one, himself a Pharisee and a scribe, who, struck with admiration at our Lord's answer, ventures an inquiry of his own. In making it he does not appear to have been animated by any sinister or malignant motive. He may, as St. Matthew seems to intimate, have been incited by others to put his question, in the hope that it might puzzle or perplex, but the question itself

[1] Matt. xxii. 34-46; Mark xii. 28-37.

has no such character, reveals no such intent; bearing as it does all the marks of being the ingenuous inquiry of one who, disturbed and dissatisfied with the manifold classifications and frivolous distinctions introduced by the ordinary teachers of the law, sought the judgment of Jesus in addressing to him the question, 'Master, which is the great, the first of all the commandments? Is there any one commandment which is entitled to pre-eminence over all the rest? if there be, what is that one command, and upon what ground does its claim to supremacy repose?' Christ's answer is direct and explicit. There is, he tells the questioner, such a command. To love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul, and mind and strength, is the first and the great commandment of the law. But there is another, a second commandment, like unto the first, flowing out of it, and founded on it: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'

The law of God, according to the view thus given of it, was not an aggregation of so many separate precepts, some of which a man might

keep, while he broke others; suggesting of course the double question whether he broke more than he kept, as if that were to decide whether on the whole he was a breaker or a keeper of the law, or, were that held to be too rude and mechanical a method of judging, suggesting a comparison in point of importance between those commands that were kept and those that were broken, so as to supply a better estimate of the amount and value of the obedience rendered. In opposition to all such views of the law of God,—views not confined to the Scribes and Pharisees of Christ's day, which lie at the bottom of all those crude notions as to man's actual standing towards the divine law which circulate widely in the world we live in, Jesus teaches that a divine unity pervades that law, a unity that cannot be broken; all its single and separate commands resting upon a common, firm, immutable basis; all so connected in meaning, spirit, and obligation, that you cannot truly obey one without obeying all, nor break one without breaking all. Looking at the law in this oneness of character, Jesus points to the two requirements of love to God and love to one another

as containing within themselves the sum and substance of the whole. First we are called upon to love the Lord, to love him as our God, to love him with all our heart. It is not a mere barren faith in his divinity, a cold and distant homage, a bare acknowledgment of his sovereign right, a studious observance of prescribed forms of worship, the presenting of offerings, the making of sacrifices in his name and for his glory, that is required. Nothing but the supreme love of the heart, pouring out the whole wealth of its affections on him, can meet this great demand. There must be no other God before or beside him, no other having an equal or rival place in our regards. All idolatrous self-love, creature-love, world-love, must be renounced in order that this first and greatest of the commands be kept. 'And thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Thyself thou mayest and shouldest love, but not supremely, not as distinct from or independent of God, but as one of his children, as an agent in his hands, as an instrument of his grace, as a vessel fashioned for his honour. Thus and thus only may self-love rightly form part of thy

being, and enter into thy motives of action. And thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself:* a mode and measure of loving others which can be truly followed and obeyed only when love to God has predominated over the natural self-idolatry; for if a man love himself supremely, he can love no other as he loves himself. All, however, is reduced to order, all brought within the limits of a possible achievement, when God gets his first and rightful place. You cannot love the God of love as he requires, without loving your neighbour also. The one love includes the other, sustains and modulates the other. If a man say he loves God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him. It is in this way that the second command is like unto the first. They are two, and at the same time one. The first cannot be kept while the second is broken, nor the second be kept while the first is broken. A false or spurious kind of love to God, showing itself in all manner of superstitious worship and self-mortification, you may have, coupled with intensely malign emotion towards others. Nay more, you may not only have them in conjunction,

but the first ministering to the second—for there have been no greater haters of their fellow-men than those who have cherished such kind of love to God,—but the true, the only genuine love to God, we cannot have, without its generating kindly and benevolent affections towards those who, equally with ourselves, are the objects of the divine regard. And, on the other hand, you may have a very ardent love to others apart from any deep love to God; but search its nature and mark its development, and you will find that neither as to the objects it aims at, nor as to the boundaries it observes, does it come up to a faithful obedience to that requirement which obliges us to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

'On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' Love is the golden link that binds the whole together, and hangs the whole upon the Throne of the Eternal. Love is the fulfilling of the law. No precept is or can be kept where it is wanting. If love be present, obedience is at once rendered easy, and gets the character that makes it pleasing in the sight of God.

The scribe's reply to our Lord's answer shows how thoroughly he sympathized with it. He had admired the wisdom shown in Christ's dealing with other questioners. He admires still more the wisdom shown in the answer to his own question. It accords entirely with what, after much thought bestowed upon the matter, he had himself come to believe. 'Well, Master, thou hast said the truth; for there is one God, and there is none other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.' The alacrity, the warmth, the vigour of this response, tell how intense the conviction was of which it was the utterance. Born and brought up though he had been in the very heart of a region where other and very different sentiments prevailed, he had come to see the comparative worthlessness of mere ceremonialism; that offerings and sacrifices were worse than idle forms, mere solemn mockeries of God, if that inner sentiment of the heart, whence only they could

have life and value, were wanting; that the only true and animating principle of all piety towards God, and of all right conduct towards our fellow-men, was love; that as the body without the spirit is dead, so all the mass of outward service without love was dead also. In our turn we wonder at the clear and just conception of the relative importance of the moral and the ceremonial, to which, placed as he had been, this man had reached. But far as he has got, he yet lacked one thing. He had ceased to put that value upon burnt-offerings and sacrifices that the mass of his countrymen did. His searching eye had seen through the hollowness of that external sanctimoniousness which was cultivated all around him with such sedulous care. But he had not yet come to see all that the first and greatest of the law's commands required, nor to feel how far short of its requirement his obedience had fallen. The hollowness of one way of attempting to obey it he fully saw, but the imperfections of that way which he had learned to put in its place, its impotence to justify the sinner before the tribunal of the Most High, he had not perceived. He

wanted the humble, broken, contrite heart; and so Jesus says to him, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God;' not far from, but yet not in; nearer by many a step than those who are going about in the rounds of a punctilious pietism to establish a righteousness of their own before God, but still not across the border-line which encompasses that kingdom which we must enter in the spirit of penitence and faith, as knowing and feeling that by the deeds of the law, how far soever our compliance with it be carried, no flesh living can be justified in the sight of God. Let the judgment passed upon this man's position by the unerring Judge proclaim to us the truth, that it is not enough to have made the discovery of the worthlessness of all service without love; that to get into the kingdom the further discovery must be made, that in all things, and especially in that very love to God which primarily and above all is required of us, we come so miserably short, have so grievously offended, that our only resource is to throw ourselves upon the rich mercy of our God revealed in Jesus Christ.

And was it not for the very purpose of turn-

ing the eyes of that scribe, the eyes of those who then stood around him, and the eyes of the men of all ages upon Himself, as the great revealer of the Father, that Jesus, having put all to silence, so that no man durst ask him any further question, in his turn becomes a questioner? The Law and the Prophets, whose sum and substance, so far as they were a code of duty, he had just declared, had something more in them than authoritative commands, were meant to accomplish other purposes besides that of making known to men their duty to God and to one another. There were promises and prophecies in them as well as precepts; prophecies and promises pointing to him by whom the law was to be magnified and made honourable. The law carried the gospel in its bosom. As to the one, the scribe put a question to Jesus, which goes to the very heart of the matter: as to the other, Jesus, seeing the Pharisees gathered around him, puts a question to them, which does the same. 'What think ye,' he says, 'of Christ? whose son is he?' The answer springs at once to every lip.

'Son of David' was the familiar, the favourite title, by which Christ, the expected Messiah, was known among them. When, amazed by his miracles, the people began to conjecture that he was indeed the Christ, they said to one another, 'Is not this the son of David?' When the woman of Syrophenicia, and the two blind beggars of Capernaum, Bartimeus of Jericho, and others, would express their faith in his Messiahship, they did it by saying, 'Have mercy on us, thou son of David.' When the multitude, translated for the time out of incredulity into belief, surrounded him on his late triumphal entry into Jerusalem, they exclaimed, 'Hosanna to the son of David!' a salutation that the very children in the Temple next day repeated—showing us how wide and general was the knowledge of this name. The answer then to Christ's first question is immediate and unhesitating. Not so the answer to the second: 'He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is

he his son?' Jesus quotes here the first verse of the 110th Psalm, a psalm assumed by him, and acknowledged by the Jews, to have been written by David, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Two great personages appear in it, the one speaking of and to the other. It is with the high position, the complex character, the glorious destinies of the latter that the psalm is occupied throughout. Addressed by the highest of all epithets, he is introduced as sitting on the loftiest of all elevations. His kingly power, his eternal priesthood, his vast and ever-widening sway, are successively set forth. The Jews admitted that these were prophecies touching the Messiah. But between them and any right apprehension of the true character of the spiritual rule and empire of that Messiah there hung an obscuring mist. The bright and gorgeous vision that had floated for ages before the eyes of the Jewish people was that of the future advent of a King, who was to raise the Jewish commonwealth to supremacy over the nations; the vision of an earthly visible world-wide monarchy to be set up by the son of David; a vision which, as their

affairs grew dark and desperate, and their national independence was more and more threatened, stood forth in brighter and brighter colouring to gild the clouds that closed in darkness above their heads; a vision clung to with an enthusiastic devotion which ennobled them as a nation, and led on to the deeds of chivalrous heroism, which have crowned with glory their last wars with the Romans, but which sunk them into spiritual blindness, and kept them from understanding the very prophecies upon which it ostensibly was founded. It was this vision, baseless as it was bright, which Jesus seeks to dissipate by putting to them his pointed inquiry: 'If Christ be David's son, how could he at the same time be David's Lord?' The true key to that announcement in the 110th Psalm, and to many similar prophecies, was wanting to the Jews so long as the true and proper divinity, as well as the true and proper humanity, of their Messiah remained unperceived and unacknowledged.

How often and how strikingly does Holy Writ set forth the double, and as it might seem incongruous relationship of Christ to David, as being

at once his son and his Sovereign, his successor and yet his Lord,—set forth the singular, and as it might seem incompatible, qualities or characteristics that belong to him! 'And there shall come forth,' saith the prophet Isaiah, 'a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.'[1] He is the rod, the branch growing up out of, hanging upon, and supported by the parent stem. But anon the image changes, and the rod, the branch, becomes the root by which the stem itself is supplied with nourishment and strength:—'And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.'[2] 'Behold,' saith Jeremiah, 'the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.'[3] Here, by an equal violence of figurative language, the helpless

[1] Isa. xi. 1. [2] Isa. xi. 10. [3] Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.

dependent branch turns into a king, and that king is elevated, not to an earthly, but to the Heavenly Throne. Similarly in Zechariah: 'Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.'[1] Here, by a curious metamorphosis the Branch first becomes the builder of a temple, then a ruler upon a throne, then a priest and king together, still upon the throne, establishing in that twofold capacity, or by help of the twofold prerogatives of prince and priest, the counsel or covenant of peace for Israel. So is it in the ancient prophecies, and so is it also in the visions of the Apocalypse. What is the first vision that John gets of Jesus in the heavenly places? A door is opened in heaven, a throne is seen set there; the right hand of him who sits upon

[1] Zech. vi. 12, 13.

the throne holds out the book sealed with the seven seals. The strong angel proclaims with the loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?' The challenge is made, resounds through heaven, remains unanswered. The apostle begins to weep, because no man is found worthy to open and to read the book. One of the elders says to him, 'Weep not; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.' John looks around for this opener coming, and lo! in the midst of the throne there stands a Lamb as it had been slain, who takes the book and opens all its seals. He is told to look for a lion, and beheld a lamb. The lion and the lamb: the strongest and the fiercest, the weakest and the gentlest of animals; in Jesus the qualities of both appear, blended in singular yet most attractive combination. And in the last revelation of himself he makes to John, Jesus says, 'I am the root and the offspring—the root and the branch—of David, and the bright and morning star.'

'What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? How

can he be David's son and David's Lord?' These last words of our Lord's public ministry, which filled the Temple courts of old, and found there no reply, are they not still going forth wherever the gospel of his grace is preached, waiting a response? Nor can any fit response be ever given till we see and be ready to acknowledge that in him, our Saviour, there meet and mingle all divine and human attributes—David's Lord in his divinity, David's son in his humanity; till we own him, and cleave to him, and hang upon him as at once our elder brother, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and our Lord and our God; the morning star on the brow of our dark night, that heralds the bright, the cloudless, the unending day.

VII.

THE WOES DENOUNCED UPON THE PHARISEES.[1]

Tuesday.

ADDRESSING himself specially to the Pharisees, Jesus asked them how Christ could be at once David's son and David's Lord, and they stood mute before him.

It is of this particular occasion that St. Mark says, 'then the common people heard him gladly.' They have been looking on and listening with intense curiosity—as well they might, for it is truly a marvellous scene that is before them. Here, on the one side, is one of themselves, an obscure Galilean, with no rank, or office, or acknowledged authority. There, on the other, stand the first men of the land, the chief of the priesthood, the heads of the scribes. It had long been known that the Pharisees repudiated and

1 Matt. xxiii.; Mark xii. 38-40; Luke xx. 45-47.

condemned the teaching of Christ. More recently their enmity had come to a head. They had even offered a reward for his apprehension. Now they meet him face to face in the most public place in all the city. Will they arrest him? will they order their officers to bind him and carry him off to prison? No: in presence of the people they will crush him with their words; they will convict him of ignorance, or incompetence, or sedition. And how shall this untaught, unfriended, unprotected man be able to stand against such odds? One can well enough imagine that when the strange word-duel in the Temple courts commenced, the sympathy of the people would be on Christ's side. Their sympathy deepens, wonder grows into admiration, as in each succeeding encounter he comes off more than conqueror, till at last his opponents stand silenced before him. Still, however, with all the wonder and all the admiration that Christ excites, other disturbing and perplexing emotions stir the breasts of the spectators: for those opponents of Jesus are the men to whom from infancy they have been taught to look up with unbounded reverence; to whose

authority, especially in all matters of religious faith and practice, they have been accustomed implicitly to bow. The adversaries of Jesus have been baffled but not convinced; an unquenched, an intensified hatred to him is obviously burning within their breasts. How is it that none of their rulers will receive him, that almost to a man they are so bitterly opposed to him?

May we not believe that in its immediate and direct object, as addressed to the perplexed and excited crowd that then stood before and around him, the discourse recorded in the 23d chapter of St. Matthew was intended to take a stumbling-block out of their way, and by the bold and fearless exposure that it made of the character and conduct of the Pharisees, to emancipate the people from that blind thraldom to their old religious leaders in which they had so long been held? But the discourse had a wider scope. It was our Lord's last day in the Temple, his last time of openly addressing the people, the closing hour of his public ministry. This interest surrounds the words then spoken, that it was in them that his last farewell to the Temple, his farewell to

his countrymen, was taken; words not spoken for that audience only, words of solemn warning for his followers in all ages, for the men of every generation. Regarding it in this light, without entering into any minute or consecutive exposition, let us offer one or two general reflections upon this discourse of our Saviour.

1. It tells us what it was that chiefly kindled against it the burning indignation of Jesus Christ. Against what are his terrible denunciations pointed? Not against either covert scepticism or open infidelity. The Sadducees are here comparatively overlooked. Not against those sins, to which one or other of the passions and instincts of our nature prompt when allowed unbridled sway. A very singular and instructive contrast shows itself throughout his ministry betwixt our Lord's treatment of that class of offences, and of the one which he here exposes. Compare, for instance, his treatment of the woman who had been a sinner, and of her to whom he said, 'Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more,' with his treatment of the haughty Pharisee, at whose table he met the one, and of the double-hearted men who

brought to him the other. It is among those making the largest professions of piety, priding themselves on their social position and the outward respectability of their lives, that Jesus discovers the materials for the severest denunciations that ever came from his lips. He finds these materials in that kind and form of religion which, under the guise of great fervour and zeal for the cause of God, beneath the large and broidered garment of a showy profession, gets ample room and opportunity for the indulgence of vanity and pride, the lordly, ambitious, despotic spirit; in that kind and form of religion that makes so much of the outward, the institutional, the ceremonial, so little of the moral, the spiritual, the practical,—which exalts the letter above the spirit of the divine commands, which, finding this old precept of Moses, 'Thou shalt bind these commandments of the Lord for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as a frontlet between thine eyes,' thought that this command was kept by having strips of parchment with passages of Scripture on them bound upon the forehead and the arm, and fancied that the

broader the parchment scrips, the more numerous the passages inscribed, the larger the honour and the service rendered unto God:—which, finding another old law of Moses, that no unclean animal should be eaten, strained every sort of drink carefully through a linen cloth, lest any gnat or the smallest unclean animalcule might be drunk:—which, meeting with the ancient Mosaic order that a tithe of all produce should be offered to the Lord, was not content with presenting a tithe of the wheat, and the barley, and the oil, the common staple products of the land, but would give it of the mint, and the anise, and the cumin, the smallest garden fruits and flowers:—which invented nice casuistical distinctions among oaths, making out that some were binding, others not, some were sinful, others not; which, notwithstanding all its punctilious attention to the minutiæ of certain outward observances, all its laborious cleansing of the outside of the cup and the platter, was full within of extortion and excess,—a very strange compound of very heterogeneous elements, distasteful to all true-hearted men, infinitely distasteful to our Lord

and Master. We might have hoped that, with the departure of that old ritualism of Judaism, with the coming in of the simpler institute of Christianity, with the lessons and the life of our Lord himself before us, that the temptation to and the opportunity for such singular and such offensive developments of human nature would depart. But no; the spirit of Pharisaism lies deep in that nature;—deepest where the superstitious and devotional element is strong and the moral is comparatively weak, not peculiar to certain times and places, or to be seen only in certain churches under the drapery of ecclesiastical ceremonialism kindred to that of the Jews. It is to be found everywhere, under all forms of religious observance; where it has the least natural aliment making all the more of what it has,—nay more, as if soured by its meagre diet, nowhere will you see a more odious and repulsive growth of it than in those very churches which have stripped themselves the barest of all forms and ceremonies.

2. Let us notice the insidiousness and deceitfulness of that spirit of Pharisaism which

in this discourse Christ so fully exposes and so heavily condemns. The men whom Christ had immediately in his eye, whose hollowness and falsity he dissects with so unsparing a hand, had a very different opinion of themselves from that which he expresses. They believed themselves to be really the most religious people in their own country,—in the world. There may have been a few of them utter and arrant hypocrites, who knew themselves to be mere pretenders, with whom all the show of devotion was intentionally and consciously assumed for selfish and sinister purposes. But we should err egregiously if we thought that such was the character of the majority. They imagined themselves to be sincere, and it was that imagination which was at the bottom of their intense self-satisfaction, their eager and ostentatious displays. Self-deception went so far with them that they actually believed themselves to be the natural successors and representatives of the prophets and righteous men of the old economy. The memory of their martyred forefathers was so dear to them, that they built their tombs and garnished their sepulchres, and

said to one another, 'If we had lived in those old times, we should not have been partakers with those who shed their blood.' Yet at this very time they are meditating the death of Jesus,—are about to imbrue their hands in the blood of God's own Son. Extraordinary instance, you may say, of self-deception. You would not think so if the eye of Omniscience were for a moment lent, and it was given to you to discern how many there are presently alive—busy, bustling, pretentious religionists, builders of prophets' tombs, garnishers of martyrs' sepulchres, the readiest to say, 'Had we lived in the days of these odious Pharisees, we had been no partakers in their guilt,'—who if subjected to the same kinds of test with the Pharisees,—these tests altered according to the changes that the world since then has undergone—would do their deed over again—in the spirit, if not in the letter, would crucify Christ afresh. Among all the spirits that have ever entered into and taken possession of our nature, there is not one of such self-deceiving power as that of Pharisaism.

3. You have a striking instance brought

before you in this discourse of a nation being reckoned with not individually but collectively. The generation in which Jesus lived had sins enough of its own to answer for. Had there stood against it but that one charge of having despised, rejected, crucified the Lord, it had been enough. But see how, in the spirit of sublime superiority to all selfish considerations, Jesus makes no mention here of the treatment given to himself. He looks backward, and lo! all the righteous blood that had been shed in the land lifts up its cry for vengeance! He looks backward, and lo! in the hand of the Great Judge the cup of wrath is seen getting fuller and fuller as the guilt of generation after generation is poured into it! He looks forward, and lo! the men of the generation then existing are beheld pouring the last drops into that cup, and by doing so, about to bring down its whole contents upon their devoted heads! But in the brief prophecy of what remained still to be done ere the treasured wrath of heaven descended there is something altogether singular. It is not a bare foretelling of the future by a commissioned

agent of heaven. The prophet here rises far above the rank of all who had gone before. He speaks as the prophets' King and Lord. A greater than all the prophets is here. 'Behold, I send unto you prophets and wise men, and scribes.'[1] Christ's feet are upon the pavement of the earthly Temple, but he speaks as from the Throne of Heaven. Let those who deny the divinity of Jesus tell us with what propriety any mortal man,—any, even the greatest of the prophets, could have spoken as he here does. The indirect, the incidental way in which he speaks, deepens the impression of his divinity. A vision of judgment is to be revealed. As he reveals it, he almost unconsciously, as we might say, realizes his own position as the Judge. And assuming that he is so when he tells us of that generation being made to suffer as well for others' transgressions as their own, what answer shall be given to those who would challenge the principle and rectitude of this procedure, but this, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' All the length that we can

[1] Matt. xxiii. 34.

here go, is to point to the thousand instances in God's ordinary providence in which the sins of fathers are visited upon their children, and to the many instances of human legislation and international action grounded upon the principle that a nation is not a set of isolated unconnected units, but a continuous corporate body, capable of contracting an obligation, and incurring a guilt that survives the existing generation. We do not say that the exemplification of it elsewhere in the arrangement of the divine providence, or its embodiment by ourselves when we assume the office of administrator or judge, carries with it the explanation of such a procedure as that announced here by Jesus Christ. We do not say that we have light enough to offer any sufficient vindication of it; but most assuredly we have not light enough to repudiate or condemn. Nay more, we are convinced that when the great mystery of God's dealings with mankind shall stand revealed in their eternal issues, it will be seen that our separate individual interests, for weal or for woe, have been wisely and righteously interlapped with the merit

and the guilt of others to a far larger extent than any of us are now prepared to believe.

4. In this discourse, a phase of the character of Christ, and in him of God, is set before us, from which we ought not to avert our eye. Christ's voice, as heard on earth, was not always one of gentleness and love. When occasion called for it, it could speak as the thunder speaks, in volumed terror. Never were severer epithets employed, never more terrible denunciations uttered, than those hurled at and heaped upon the heads of the Pharisees. Yet no mingling here of sinful human passion, of malice or revenge, no absence even of love. Has Jesus forgotten to be gracious? Are tenderness and compassion clean gone out of that most loving heart? We cannot believe so for a moment. Then let us believe that the deep, the strong, the burning indignation that breaks out here has a place and power of its own in the bosom of our Lord, and dwells together in perfect harmony with the milder and gentler attributes of his nature. Lightning lurks amid the warm soft drops of the summer shower; a consuming fire

may come out of the very heart of love. Christ is the world's great Saviour; he is also the world's great Judge. It was as our Saviour he came down to this earth, and gentle and still indeed was the voice in which that office was discharged. He did not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets; but lest we should misinterpret, and imagine that his spirit was too soft ever to kindle into wrath, his hand too gentle to do other services than those of love, once and again, as here, he assumes the office of the Judge, and speaks with a startling sternness. He began his teaching on the mountain-side of Galilee; he closed it in the courts of the Temple at Jerusalem. Compare the two discourses—the Sermon on the Mount, this discourse in the Temple: the one begins with blessings, the other begins and ends with rebuke; the one pours its benedictions over the heads of the faithful, the other its maledictions over the heads of the faithless; the seven woes of the one confront the seven beatitudes of the other. Or take for contrast Christ's farewell to his friends, and his farewell to his enemies: the one composed

of words of comfort, closing in that sublime intercessory prayer which he left behind him as a type or specimen of his advocacy for us in the heavenly places; the other composed throughout of terrible denunciations, types and preludes of those awful judgments which in his judicial character he shall pronounce and execute upon the finally impenitent. And what does all this teach us but that the religion of Jesus Christ has a twofold aspect? It carries both the blessing and the curse in its bosom. If here it speaks peace, there it speaks terror; if to some it has nothing but words of tenderness and encouragement, to others it has nothing but words of warning and of woe. It stands as the pillar-cloud stood between the Egyptians and the Israelites: with a side of glowing brightness and a side of overshadowing gloom. And yet, let us not fail to notice, that after all it is not in tones of wrath that the last accents of this farewell of our Lord to his enemies fall upon our ear. The fire of righteous indignation that burns within him cannot but go forth. As flash after flash of the lightning it falls upon the hypocrite and false devotee. But under that

fire the inner heart of Jesus at last dissolves into tenderness. Pity, infinite pity, pours her quenching tears upon it, and with another look, and in altered tone, a look and tone in which the compassion of the Godhead reveals itself, he exclaims, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' 'I would, but ye would not.' The willingness is all with him, the unwillingness with us. May the very thought of this take our unwillingness away; that at the last our house be not left desolate, that it be no other than the home that he hath prepared for all who love him.

VIII.

THE WIDOW'S MITE—CERTAIN GREEKS DESIRE TO SEE JESUS.[1]

Tuesday.

HIS terrible denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees having been delivered, Jesus passes into a court of the Temple, the innermost to which they were admitted, called therefore the Court of the Women. On one side of this court stood the thirteen large chests, with openings shaped like trumpets, into which the free-will offerings of the people were thrown. Over against them Jesus seats himself, watching the passers-by. He sees many rich approach, and throw in, perhaps ostentatiously, their large contributions, but he does not make any comment on their gifts. At last, however, a poor woman approaches the place of deposit. Modestly, timidly, almost furtively, as if ashamed

[1] Mark xii. 41-44; Luke xxi. 1-4; John xii. 20-36.

of being seen, and hiding what she gives, as all too small for public notice, she casts her farthing in, and is in haste to depart. See how the eye of the watcher fastens upon this woman. She is retreating in haste to hide herself in the crowd without, but she must not go till other eyes than those of Jesus have also been turned upon her. 'He calls to him his disciples,' he bids them mark her well, and as their eyes are all upon her, he says to them, 'Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than they all.'

How many were there in Jerusalem who, if their attention had been directed to the poor widow's act, and it had been told them that in casting these two mites she had cast in her all, would have condemned that act! What was cast into the treasury went either to the poor or to the priests, to relief of the indigent or the upholding of the worship of the Temple. But were there many poorer in all the city than the poor widow herself? Should she not have kept the little which she had for the relieving of her own wants? As to the priests and the Temple,

a large enough provision was made for them by public and private charity, without her being asked to add her trifling contribution. Who could tell, when it came into their hands, what these well-fed priests would do with her two mites? And even if she had a better security that her donation would be well applied, what need was there to give what was so much to her and what was so little to them? How many sayings of this kind might her act have called forth! and for one that might have praised, probably there would have been ten who would have condemned. But other eyes than those of a mere earthly prudence are on her, and another and very different sentence than one of condemnation is passed. Broad and deep in that poor widow's heart had the love of the God who was worshipped within that Temple been shed. There, by the post of these gates, she had often waited and worshipped, and there, in her hours of sorrow, in that worship her burdened spirit had got relief. She would answer to the call, that she knew that the Lord of that Temple had given to aid in the maintenance of its services. It was

a debt of gratitude that she owed; it was a privilege to take any share in such a work. True, it was but the veriest trifle that she could afford; but it was willingly and gladly given. She would not have liked that any of those rich people, who were throwing in their silver and their gold as they went by, had seen her two mites drop out of her fingers. But there were eyes from which she could not hide them; and little as she thought of it, there was one across the court sitting in judgment upon her, who not only approved her deed, but elevated her above all the donors of the day. She is not only the greatest giver of them all, she has cast in more than they all together,—more, not in money value, but in moral worth. And what else, by giving such world-wide circulation to this her act, and this his sentence on it, did Jesus mean, than to give a world-wide circulation to the truth, that in his sight, in his Father's sight, it is the motive which gives its true character to the act; that greatness in his estimate of things consists not in the doing of great acts that every eye must see, and that every tongue may be ready to praise, but in doing what

may be little things,—so small that they shall escape all human notice, and so insignificant that there may be none to think them worthy of any praise; but doing them in a great spirit, from a great motive, for a great and noble and holy end? He is not the largest giver who, out of his abundance, and from many mixed motives, gives to this charity or to that, but he who, impelled by the pure love of God, and the desire to help on a good object, gives in largest relative proportion out of the surplus that remains to him after his own and his family's wants have been provided for.

We do not know the circumstances otherwise of this poor widow. Let us assume that these two mites were all she had after her personal wants had been satisfied. Let us assume that, slender as her income may have been, yet, like all the poor in the land of Israel, she had some such slender income upon which she could count. We cannot believe that if by casting these two mites in the treasury she actually made herself a pauper, with nothing thereafter but the casual and uncertain charity of

others to depend on, that our Lord would have approved of the act. Assuming, then, that it was her all, in the sense of being her all that was left after the provision of her own immediate wants, that she bestowed upon the Temple treasury; assuming also that all those rich people who went before and who followed her, in the first instance appropriated of their incomes what was needful to maintain them in the different grades of society in which they respectively were placed; let us ask ourselves,—if the scale of giving on which she acted had been universally adopted, what would the revenue of that Temple have been? We imagine that the woman had no family; we imagine that she had none naturally claiming a provision at her hands; we imagine that that treasury of the Temple was the one great channel through which her charity flowed. It would be wrong indeed in such a state of things as that in the midst of which our lot is cast, to turn her act into a precedent,—for any one object of Christian or common charity, to claim the entire surplus that any one, rich or poor, among us may possess. But surely all due

limitations and exceptions made, there is something in the example thus held out which it becomes us to imitate; and we shall miss at least one great lesson which it gives if we fail to perceive how right a thing it is that this burden of giving should be equally and proportionally borne; knowing that our gifts are all accepted, not according to what a man hath not, but according to what every man has. The lesson which, of all others, and in all departments of benevolent effort, we most need to have impressed on us—is the duty of sharing honourably and equally every burden that Christianity imposes.

The time and circumstances under which the approving verdict was passed upon the widow's offering enhance its interest. Woe after woe, in tones of terrible impressiveness, have pealed like volleyed thunder over the heads of his adversaries, and are still echoing in the courts of the Temple. As if to show how quickly and fully the strong emotions of righteous indignation have passed out of his breast, he sits quietly down in the attitude of an unoccupied observer, all trace

of anger gone from his countenance, all tones of anger from his voice, and asks his disciples to notice the poor widow's act.

But there was another and still more interesting exhibition of the state of our Lord's thoughts and feelings as he took his farewell of the Temple. It is the high prerogative of genius to be able vividly to realize and represent the thoughts, and sentiments, and words appropriate to all kinds of characters, in all varieties of positions. Who that has read the pages of our great English dramatist has not remarked how true to nature each representation is, whether it be monarch on the throne or clown in the closet, statesman, warrior, prelate, or peasant that appears, and speaks, and acts? It is by the exercise of this great faculty that the personages and events of the past are reproduced and set forth before our eye. There is one Being, however, who appeared upon the stage of time, who stands beyond the reach of this faculty; for, be his genius what it may, who shall put himself in the place, or think the thoughts, or enter into the emotions of the Son of God, as he passed through his earthly

sojourn? And yet how natural the desire to know the thoughts awakened in his mind, the emotions kindled in his heart, by the incidents through which he passed, the individuals with whom he was thrown into contact? Here, however, imagination is at fault. Conscious of its incapacity, it reverently withdraws from the attempt either to conceive or to express how Jesus was affected by the varying events of his earthly pilgrimage. We cannot, dare not, go here beyond what is revealed. And that is but little. No reader of the Gospels can fail to have noticed how seldom it is that Christ gives us any glimpse of what was passing in the interior of his own spirit. With all the greater interest do we ponder over the few occasions in which the mantle that was ordinarily so closely drawn round its inner shrine is partially uplifted. Such is the interest which attaches to that passage of his life which now comes under our review.

As Jesus is sitting over against the treasury, Andrew and Philip come and tell him that in the outer court of the Gentiles certain Greeks are standing, who have expressed a strong desire to

see him. Born and brought up as heathen men, they had been so far convinced of the superiority of the Jewish faith, that they were in the habit of coming up to Jerusalem to worship there the one living and true God. Whether they had seen or heard much or anything of Jesus before this time, what it was which inspired them with such a strong desire to see him now, we do not know. This may have been their first visit to Jerusalem. Their earliest knowledge of Christ may have been derived from what they had witnessed within the last few days. They must have heard of the raising of Lazarus and the many miracles which had previously been wrought. They must have seen our Lord's triumphal entry into the city, and noticed how the whole community had been moved. The cleansing of the Temple must have made a deep impression on their minds. It was the court of the Gentiles, the very part of the Temple appropriated to the use of that class to which they belonged, which Jesus had sought to cleanse from its impurities and profanations. Let us imagine that those devout Greeks had themselves been scandalized by see-

ing the place consecrated to worship turned into a common market ground, by seeing the priesthood more eager to make money than to win Gentiles to their faith. Here, however, is one man, a Jew, animated by something like the right spirit, who drives out these buyers and sellers, whose aim and effort is that this place be made what it was meant to be, a house of prayer for all nations. Who can this Jesus be? He calls the Temple his own house. He speaks of God as his own Father. The chief priests and rulers are angry at him; have even put a price upon his head; have given orders that if any man know where he was, he should tell, in order that he might be taken and put to death. Yet he walks openly in the midst; the people gaze on him with wonder; the very children hail him with hosannas as the Son of David. Who, those strangers ask again, can this Jesus be? In their curiosity they come to Philip, a Galilean, a native of Bethsaida, one who knows their language, with whom they may have had some previous acquaintance, or they come to him because he is the one nearest them at the time, with whom they can most readily

communicate, and they say to him: 'Sir, we would see Jesus.' Philip tells Andrew; Philip and Andrew, the Greeks in all likelihood following them, tell Jesus. He has many around him, when this message is conveyed to him, and the disciples and the Greeks stand waiting the result. He gives no direct or immediate answer. He stands a moment, lost in thought, and then breaks out into expressions, vague and dark enough to those who listened to them at the time, yet full of the richest meaning, and conveying, too, though neither the Greeks nor the disciples nor any of those around may have then seen how it was so, one of the best answers to the request which had just been made.

To understand this, let us remember that Jesus knew from the beginning what was to be the broad issue of his mission to this earth. The words of the Father, spoken of old by the prophet, were familiar to his ear: 'It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to restore the preserved of Israel. I will give thee to be a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth: a light

to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of my people Israel.' Knowing this, familiar with this from the beginning as the end and object of his incarnation, one cannot help believing that the narrowness of the bounds within which his personal ministry was confined, and the smallness of the results which, during its continuance, that ministry realized, were often as a heavy burden pressing upon the Redeemer's spirit. As a son, indeed, he learned obedience; he willingly submitted to the restraints laid on him; he cheerfully conformed to the will of Him that sent him, and expended his personal labours upon the lost sheep of the house of Israel,—but not without many an inward thought of the joy set before him, of the harvest yet to be gathered in, of the glory yet to be revealed,—thoughts kept buried in his heart, not at first to be uttered, for who could understand or sympathize? But here, at last, on the very eve of his agony and death, these Greeks, these Gentiles, come desiring to see him. He hails them as the representatives of the vast community to which they belong. In their coming to him he sees the first-fruits of that

rich harvest which the world in all its borders was to yield. The great future of the gospel times and ages, hidden from all others, brightens into its full glory before his eye. The time, he knows, is near,—he takes this very message from these Greeks as the token of its approach,—when the mystery shall be revealed, and the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile shall be broken down, wide over all the earth the glad tidings of salvation in his name go forth, and men of all peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kindreds be gathered into that one fold, of which he is to be the Shepherd. But between the present and this great result there lay, now very near at hand, his own sufferings and death, —the lifting of him upon that cross which is to serve as the great means of gathering all men unto him.

Connecting thus, as was most natural, the petition of the Greeks with the gathering in of the Gentiles, and that gathering in with his own approaching death, Jesus answered and said: 'The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, I say unto you, Except

a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.' Take a single pickle of seed-corn: there dwells within it the mysterious principle of life,—the gift of the Creator, that no man can bestow. Keep it above the ground; preserve it carefully from the touch of death and of corruption, it may abide for years, retaining its own vitality; but it so abides in solitary unfruitfulness—no life comes out of its life. Bury it, however, beneath the sod; let it pass down into what becomes to it the realm of corruption and of death; let it rot and die there, then from out that death the new life cometh,—fresh, abounding, multiplying life. So it is, and so only, that it bringeth forth much fruit. And of the world's great spiritual harvest Jesus is the one seed-corn. He had the life in himself, and might have kept it for ever there. But to turn it into the source of life to others he too must obey the law of life, propagating itself, and spreading abroad through death. He too must die, that by dying he may bring forth much fruit.

The death of the Redeemer stands by itself;

in a manner peculiar to itself the source of spiritual life to all united to him by faith. And yet there is a sense, and that a most real and important one, in which what was true of the head is true also of all the members. They too must come under the operation of the great principle and law which brings life out of death. They too must die, as he their Saviour died; must take up their cross in turn, and in self-denial and self-sacrifice bear it; they must have a fellowship with his sufferings; be planted in the likeness of his death; be crucified with Christ; must fill up what remains of his sufferings for his body the Church. 'For,' said Jesus, immediately after having spoken of his own death and its great issues, 'he that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.' 'If any man serve me'—be willing to become like-minded, like-hearted with me, look to my death as not only the fountainhead of his own spiritual life, but the model after which the whole temper, frame, and spirit of his being is to be moulded, then, added Jesus,—'let him follow me, and

where I am there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.' In the quick survey of the future that now engages the Saviour's thoughts, he sees beyond his death, realizes his position as exalted to the Father's right hand in the heavenly places—the shame and the dishonour, the buffeting and the scourging, the agony and the dying, exchanged for the glory he had with the Father before the world was. A kindred elevation and like honours awaited all who took up their cross daily, and in self-denial and self-sacrifice bore it; sufferers with him here, they would be glorified with him hereafter.

Such as I have thus tried to trace it was the current of thought running through the first utterances of Jesus, given in answer to the announcement that certain Greeks stood without desiring to see him. But now a sudden change comes over the spirit of the Redeemer. His eye closes on the crowd around; he ceases to think of, to speak with man; he is alone with the Father. A dark cloud descends and wraps him in its folds; he fears as he enters into this

cloud. From the midst of its thick darkness a trembling agitated voice is heard telling of a spirit sorely troubled within. Those of you who have watched by the bed of the dying must often have noticed how as the great event drew near foreshadowings of it came at measured intervals—a struggle, a faintness, a pallor so like the last that you held your breath as thinking that the spirit was about to pass. Death often throws such shadows of itself before, and the greatest of all deaths, the death of the Son of God, was also thus prefigured. The agony of the garden, what was it? It was but the spiritual anguish of the cross let down beforehand upon the soul of the Redeemer. The inward agony that wrung from the lips of the dying Jesus the bitter cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' was the same in source, in character, in object, with that which forced the thrice repeated prayer, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' And the closing utterance of Gethsemane, 'Not my will, O God; thy will be done,' is it not a softened echo of the last and loud triumphant exclamations, 'It is finished.

Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit'? Still more striking, however, is the likeness between what took place visibly, audibly here within the Temple, and what happened two days afterwards in the solitude of the garden. The correspondence is too close to be overlooked. You have in each case the struggle, the prayer, the triumph, following each other in the same order. 'My soul,' said Jesus to the three disciples as he passed into the interior of the garden, 'is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' 'Now,' in the hearing of the company within the Temple, he said, 'Now is my soul troubled.' 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,' is the prayer in the one case; 'Father, save me from this hour,' the prayer in the other. And the conflict is hushed, and the troubled spirit sinks to rest in the one case, saying, 'Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt;' and in the other, 'But for this cause came I unto this hour; Father, glorify thy name.'

'Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.'

Twice before—at the Baptism in the Jordan, and the Transfiguration on the Mount—the same voice had been heard. But this third instance has more of publicity, if not of solemnity, attending it. At the baptism there were few present, and we may reasonably doubt whether any but John and Jesus saw the descending dove, and heard the voice from heaven. At the Transfiguration there were present only the chosen three; but here, in the Temple, before a listening crowd, in answer to a public and solemn appeal, this voice gives its crowning accrediting testimony.

This testimony given the cloud disperses, the divine colloquy between the Son and the Father ceases. Christ's thoughts return to earth, to flow once more along the channel into which the application of the Greeks had led them. First he turns aside for a moment to correct the misapprehension of some of the spectators. It had been here as it was on the occasion of Paul's conversion on his way to Damascus. Some had heard but a confused noise, and would have it that it was nothing more than a common peal of thunder that had sounded

above their heads; others had made out that it was a voice, but not catching the words, or not entering into their meaning, would have it that it was an angel that in some unknown tongue had been addressing him. Jesus tells them that it was indeed a voice which they had heard, and that it had spoken not so much on his account as on theirs. Then, taking up once more the idea which runs as a connecting link through the whole of this passage, that the time had come for the completion of his great work, and the gathering up of its fruits, his eye glances over the whole realm of heathendom; he sees that vast domain given over to the great usurper, the prince of this world, the spirit of unrighteousness sitting in the high places, and exercising an unhallowed supremacy. The time had come, however, for a world given over to wickedness to be judged, and for the usurper, who had so long held dominion over it, to be cast out. But how, and by what instrument? Not by might nor by power; not by bolts of vengeance flung at the ungodly; not by the hand of violence laid upon the usurper,

and he dragged off with chains of iron binding him; no, but by another power mightier than his drawing men away from him, dissolving their allegiance to him, linking them in love to God. 'And I,' said Jesus, 'if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.'

Such, as foreseen and pre-announced by our Lord himself, was to be the effect of his crucifixion. It was to clothe him with a power over the spirits of men, unlimited in its range, omnipotent in its influence, designed and fitted to exert its benignant sway as widely as the human family is scattered. From the time that he was lifted up, by his cross, its triumphs and its attractions, by all that it so willingly holds out for their acceptance and for their imitation, Jesus has been bringing all men to him, —men of every age, of every country, of every character, of every condition; the wise and the simple, the rich and the poor, the honoured and the despised, Jews, Greeks, Barbarians, Scythians, bond and free. He puts this cross into our hands; he bids us lift it up, he bids us carry it abroad. Ours the outward work of letting all men

know and see who it was that died for them on Calvary, and what it was that by dying for them he has done. His the inward power to work upon the heart, and by that charm which neither space nor time can ever weaken, to win it to peace, to love, to holiness, to heaven.

IX.

THE PROPHECIES OF THE MOUNT.[1]

Tuesday.

THE stormy collision between Christ and the chief priests at length was over. Jesus, calling the twelve around him, left that court of the Temple in which the conflict had been carried on, not as one defeated or driven away by his adversaries, but clearly and avowedly as the victor. It looks, from the two incidents which followed, as if Jesus, his public teaching in the Temple over, lingered yet a little while reluctant to take what he knew would be his last sight of its sacred interior. At last, however, sadly and slowly he departs. There was perhaps something marked and noticeable in the earnest looks Jesus was bestowing on the buildings. There had certainly been much in what they had just seen and heard

[1] Matt. xxiv., xxv.; Mark xiii.; Luke xxi. 5-36.

to excite the attention of his disciples. Those last words of his address to the Pharisees ring heavily in their ears,—'Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.' What house is to be left so desolate? Is it this very Temple in which they stand? What kind of desolation is to overtake that house? Is it indeed, as some words of their Master, spoken long before this time, might seem to imply, to be destroyed? A dark foreboding of some awful catastrophe hanging over that sacred pile is upon their spirits; and one of them, giving vague expression to the common feeling, and with some dim hope that something further, clearer, may be told, said, 'Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!' 'See ye not,' is our Lord's reply, 'all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.' Distinct and unambiguous announcement! One cloud of obscurity at least is rolled away. The solid, stately, sumptuous fabric on which all their eyes

are fastened is to perish, from its very foundation to be overturned. But though this fact be thus made certain, how many questions as to the time, the manner, the causes, the consequences of it, would at once arise to trouble the disciples' mind. Their Master, however, is already on his way to the gate which leads out to Bethany, and they follow. Silent all and thoughtful they follow him; they descend into the valley of Jehoshaphat, cross the Kedron, begin the ascent of Olivet, have reached a height which commands the city, where Jesus pauses and sits down,—as that accurate narrator Mark informs us, 'over against the Temple.' It must have been near the very spot where, two or three days before, Jesus had beheld the city and wept over it, and through his tears had seen that sad vision of Jerusalem beleaguered, and her enemies casting a trench around her, and compassing her about, and keeping her on every side, and laying her even with the ground, and leaving not one stone upon another. As Jesus and his disciples sat down upon the ridge of Olivet, the eyes of all would rest upon the sumptuous edifice before them there, across

the valley, glowing now beneath the beams of the setting sun. The quiet spot, the evening hour, the serene attitude, his words so lately spoken, all conspire to draw the disciples' thoughts upon the dark and doubtful future. Gently approaching him, Peter and James and John and Andrew put to Christ the question, 'Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?'

It is of the utmost importance, as throwing light upon the whole structure and meaning of Christ's answer, that we look into the inquiry to which it was a response. Taking up that inquiry with the information which we now possess, we should say that it referred to three distinct and separate events:—(1.) The destruction of the Temple; (2.) The coming of Christ; (3.) The end of the world. But the men who made that inquiry had no clear idea of these three events being distinct and separate from each other. They had heard their Master, and that very recently, speak of his impending sufferings and death, and of another coming of the Son of Man, when he should be revealed in his glory. They had heard him

say, 'Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.' What a mass of difficulties was here for these men with their existing beliefs to unravel! Christ's coming to his kingdom they had always looked forward to as the issue speedily to be realized, when he should ascend the throne of Israel and rule upon the earth as earth's acknowledged sovereign. But somehow, between them and that issue were interposed those sufferings and that death the object of which they could not comprehend. They had always associated Christ's coming to his kingdom with the elevation of their country to the first place among the nations, and the restoring and purifying of their great sanctuary at Jerusalem; but now Jesus speaks of coming not to restore but to destroy. He tells them of a time when of all those great buildings of the Temple not one stone should be left upon another. Was that to be at the time of his coming, and was the time of his coming to be the end of the world? Imagining that it must

be so, and yet unable to see how it could be so, incapable of dissociating the three events, yet unable to harmonize what had been said about each, they come with all their obscurity and confusion of thought to Jesus, and they say to him, 'Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?'

Look now at the reply of Jesus to this question, as given in the 24th and 25th chapters of St. Matthew, and ask yourselves how far did Jesus go in clearing away the doubts or misapprehensions which the complex question put to him involved. Did he at once, clearly and unambiguously, inform his disciples that the destruction of Jerusalem was at hand? that it would happen within the lifetime of men then living? Did he, separating between different future comings of his, some figurative, some personal, tell them that it was to his first figurative coming he had referred, when he said that there were some of those then standing before them who should witness it? Did he proceed to separate by a long interval of many centuries the coming

to judge Jerusalem, from his coming to avenge his own elect, to gather them from the four winds of heaven, and set up his kingdom upon the earth? or did he separate again that personal advent at the beginning of the millennium, from the day of the world's final judgment, and the passing away of these heavens and this earth? So far from this, the prophetic discourse of our Lord is studiously and purposely so framed, that with no other guidance than that which itself affords, we still might confound, as the disciples confounded, the three advents of our Lord. With the fulfilment of the first part in our hands, as an event long since gone by, we are able to mark the separating line which divides the first advent of Christ, that day of judgment of the Lord, from all others that are to follow. Had we, however, stood where the apostles did, had we had this great comprehensive draft or sketch of the future held up to our eyes, as it was to theirs, would it have been possible to discern even that dividing line? For how is this prophetic picture framed? Behind a foreground filled with signs and tokens of impending woes,

there rises as the first summit of a mountain range the Lord's coming to visit Jerusalem in his anger; then, right over that summit, almost on the same level, but dimmer, appearing to the eye quite close to it,—the intervening valley quite hid from sight,—another summit is beheld, another judgment-advent of the Lord, a second, and, as many believe, even farther back, yet a third. What seems, however, especially to perplex the eye as it rests on this prophetic picture, is not only that events are brought close together which may be,—some of which we now know are,—actually distant from each other by many centuries; not only are marks and tokens of these intervening spaces wanting here, not only are all the events of the one class described in the same way, painted in the same colours, but each is used as typical of those which come behind, described accordingly in terms which appear to belong to its successor rather than to itself; and so it is that many readers have felt it to be impossible to determine of many of the sayings of the discourse, whether they are to be applied to the first or second or third advent of Christ.

With these general observations, let us take up the discourse itself. It will be found that it divides itself into three parts, which on the whole correspond to the three inquiries which are virtually involved in the question of the disciples: the first part, from the beginning of the 24th chapter to its 29th verse, being occupied with the destruction of Jerusalem; the second, from the 29th verse of the 24th chapter to the 30th verse of the 25th chapter, being occupied with the Lord's advent to establish and set up his kingdom upon the earth; and the third, from the 31st verse to the end of the 25th chapter, occupied with the final judgment and the end of the world. I shall have a word or two to say hereafter as to whether we should distinguish the second of these sections in any way from the third; whether there shall be any other future coming of Christ besides the one when he shall come to close the present order of things. Meanwhile let us turn our thoughts to that portion, the easiest certainly to be understood, which sets forth the coming siege and ruin of the holy city. When shall these things be? when shall Jerusalem be destroyed? Jesus does not satisfy

the curiosity that had respect alone to the date of the event, which would like to know how many years it would be till the ruin of their ancient city was accomplished, but he gives them, not one, but many signals of its approach. False Christs were to arise, there were to be wars and rumours of wars, and earthquakes, in divers places, and famine and pestilence, and persecution of themselves. These, however, were to be but the beginning of sorrows; they were to regard them as so many tokens that the end was drawing on. The ten verses from the 4th to the 14th are occupied with the detail of these. All who have access to the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus, can easily satisfy themselves how fully and accurately all these tokens were verified during the years which lay between the ascension of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Without referring to historic details, let me rather ask you to notice how Christ subordinates the prophetic intimations which he makes to the instructions, warnings, consolations with which he accompanies them. Does he speak of

false Christs appearing? he prefaces that prophecy by saying, 'Take heed that no man deceive you.' Does he speak of coming wars and rumours of wars? he adds, 'See that ye be not troubled.' Does he detail the sufferings to which his own followers during that interval are to be exposed? he follows it up by the assurance that he who shall endure to the end shall be saved. It was not so much to prove his prophetic power, not so much to gratify their desire that some pre-intimation of the approaching event should be given them, as to forewarn and forearm against the spiritual dangers to which they were exposed, that Jesus entered on these details.

Even here, however, in the first section—whose reference to the proximate event of the destruction of Jerusalem no one can doubt—we have instances of that double sense of the Lord's sayings, their applying to the incident more immediately alluded to, yet carrying along with them an ulterior reference to the future and kindred one with which in the broad delineation it is conjoined. 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved:' the primary signification here is, that he who, through all

these seductive influences of false prophets, through all these wars and rumours of wars, through all these fiery trials of persecution, should hold fast his fidelity, would be delivered from that destruction which was to descend upon Jerusalem; the secondary signification, one which extends to every period of the Church, and to every one who abideth faithful unto death, holds out in promise, the greater, the spiritual, the everlasting salvation. Again, the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached for a witness unto all nations. In their primary sense these words received their first fulfilment anterior to the destruction of Jerusalem. 'Their sound,' says Paul, speaking of the first missionaries of the cross, 'went unto all the earth, their words unto the ends of the world.' In another epistle, he speaks of the gospel which the Colossians had heard, as preached to every creature which is under heaven. But in a wider and more strictly literal sense, before the final advent which the first symbolizes, there was to be a diffusion over all the earth of the knowledge of Christ,—the two signs here given of Christ's coming to

destroy Jerusalem, a general apostasy, the love of many waxing cold, and a widespread dissemination of the truth, being, as we know from the other parts of the discourse, the very signs by which the second advent of our Lord is to be preceded.

But Jesus not only mentions certain signals by whose appearance they might be admonished that the great catastrophe was drawing on, he gives a token by which they might know that it was at the very door. He does this in order to dictate the course which they should then take in order to provide for their safety. 'When ye shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing where it ought not, in the holy place,' etc. In St. Luke's Gospel it stands, 'When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies.' When the two came into conjunction,—the outward sign of the city being compassed about with armies,—the inward one of some flagrant desecration of the Holy Place within the Temple being perpetrated,—they were to betake themselves to instant flight. And so great was the expedition they were to use, that he who

was on the house-top was not to wait to come down by the inner stair to take anything out of the house, but, escaping even as he was, was to descend at once by the outer flight of stairs, which, in Jewish houses, led from the house-top to the street, and fly as for his life. We cannot now say decisively what the abomination of desolation was; doubtless it was recognised by those for whose benefit Christ's words were spoken. We know, however, that two years before the city was invested by Vespasian, a Roman army, under Cestius Gallus, approached and invested it. It strangely enough happened that as Titus surprised the city at the time of the Passover, Cestius surprised it at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, when all the male population of Judea was collected in the capital. As there can be little doubt that the Hebrew converts to Christianity continued to observe the greater ceremonies of their ancient faith up to the time of the fall of Jerusalem, they too would be there along with the rest. They would see Jerusalem compassed with armies, and when, coincident with this there was some desecration of the

Holy Place, they would know that the time for their flight had come. The siege by Cestius was sent as a warning to them, as the after siege was sent as a punishment to their unbelieving countrymen. It occurred in the month of October, one of the mildest in the Jewish year. Their flight, therefore, was not in the winter. It has been proved that the day on which Cestius unexpectedly, and in a panic which never could be accounted for, suddenly called off his troops, and entirely retreated from the city, was a Tuesday. Their flight, therefore, was not upon the Sabbath. Our Saviour's direction that they should pray that neither of these two things should happen to them, what was it but a prayer on his part that they should be exposed to neither of these calamities in their flight?—a prayer which in mercy was granted.

'For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.'[1] The history of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem is a dark picture of horrors, illumined by most extraordi-

[1] Matt. xxiv. 21.

nary displays of heroism. I do not know whether we are to receive the words of Jesus in describing it as if they were to be exactly and literally verified, or whether we are to take them, as we must take so many declarations of Holy Writ, as being true not so much in the letter as in the spirit. Certainly, however, neither before nor since have we read of so many men—upwards, Josephus tells us, of a million—perishing within a single city during its siege. Nor can a parallel easily be found to some of the horrible incidents realized within those beleaguered walls. Take, for instance, the description given by Dean Milman of the effects of famine. I quote the passage, as containing not merely a fulfilment of this prophecy of Christ, but of another and still earlier prophecy of Moses :—

'Every kind feeling, love, respect, natural affection, were extinct through the all-absorbing want. Wives would snatch the last morsel from husbands, children from parents, mothers from children. . . . If a house was closed, they supposed that eating was going on, and they burst in and squeezed the crumbs from the mouths and throats

of those who were swallowing them. Old men were scourged till they surrendered the food to which their hands clung desperately, and even were dragged about by the hair till they gave up what they had. Children were seized as they hung upon the miserable morsels they had got, whirled around and dashed upon the pavement. Tortures which cannot be related with decency were employed against those who had a loaf or a handful of barley.... The very dead were searched as though they might conceal some scrap of food. The most loathsome and disgusting food was sold at an enormous price. They gnawed their belts, shoes, and even the leathern coats of their shields. Chopped hay and shoots of trees sold at high prices. Yet what were all these horrors to that which followed? There was a woman of Peræa, from the village of Bethezob, Mary the daughter of Eleazer. She possessed considerable wealth when she took refuge in the city. Day after day she had been plundered by the robbers, whom she had provoked by her bitter imprecations. No one, however, would mercifully put an end to her

misery, and, her mind maddened with wrong, her body preyed upon by famine, she wildly resolved on an expedient which might gratify at once her vengeance and her hunger. She had an infant that was vainly endeavouring to obtain some moisture from her dry bosom. She seized it, cooked it, ate one half and set the other half aside. The smoke and the smell of food quickly reached the robbers; they forced her door, and with horrible threats commanded her to give up what she had been feasting on. She replied with horrible indifference that she had carefully reserved for her good friends a part of her meal. She uncovered the remains of her child. The savage men stood speechless, at which she cried out with a shrill voice, "Eat, for I have eaten; be not more delicate than a woman, more tender-hearted than a mother, or if ye are too religious to touch such food, I have eaten half already, leave me the rest." They retired pale, and trembling with horror. The story spread rapidly through the city, and reached the Roman camp, where it was first heard with incredulity, afterwards with the deepest commiseration. How dread-

fully must the words of Moses have forced themselves upon the minds of all those Jews who were not entirely unread in their holy writings: "The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not adventure the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter, and toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear; for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly, in the siege and straitness wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates."'

Such were the horrors from witnessing and sharing in which it was the benevolent intention of our Lord, by these prophecies, warnings, and directions, to shield the faithful few who should bear his name and profess his religion in the midst of their unbelieving countrymen. The care and foresight of their divine Master thus placed them on an eminence whence they might discern beforehand the gathering of the great storm, might quietly watch its gradual advances, and

ere it burst upon their heads find safety in a timely flight. Nor was the solicitude of the Saviour expressed in vain. It has been a tradition of the Church from the earliest ages that not a single Christian Jew perished in the siege of Jerusalem. While we turn therefore to this discourse of our Redeemer, as presenting so striking a monument of his prescience, we turn to it with still greater pleasure as presenting a monument of that affectionate, foreseeing, providing love he bears to all his faithful followers. Neither shall any of these his little ones perish; for them too, when straits and dangers press them round, the way of escape shall be opened. They shall lift up their eyes to the hills, whence cometh their aid. They shall dwell on high, and their place of defence shall be the munition of rocks.

X.

THE PROPHECIES OF THE MOUNT.[1]

Tuesday.

'TELL us,' said his disciples to Jesus as they sat with him on the mount, 'when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?' Imagining that they would be nearly, if not altogether contemporaneous, they mixed up all the three events: the destruction of Jerusalem, the coming of Christ in his kingdom and glory, and the end of the world. How easy it had been for Christ to have corrected their errors both as to events and dates, to have told them plainly and explicitly that the destruction of Jerusalem was to precede by many centuries his second coming and the end of the world. Instead of this he leaves their errors uncorrected, allows the confusion that was in

[1] Matt. xxiv. 29-44; Mark xiii. 25-37; Luke xxi. 25-36.

their minds to remain. Nay more, in his reply he so speaks of his coming to judge the world as to make it impossible for his disciples at the time, and in the position they then occupied, to perceive that more than one such coming on his part was spoken of. With the siege and overthrow of Jerusalem behind us as an event long since gone by, we can understand the first part of our Lord's prophetic discourse delivered upon this occasion, and give to it its obvious and only possible application, by separating that first coming of Christ from all other after advents. But we stand to the remainder of the discourse very much in the same position in which the disciples at first stood to the whole of it. And there is a question about that remainder which we now, I apprehend, are as little able yet to solve as the disciples upon Mount Olivet were able to conclude, from what Christ then said, that the destruction of Jerusalem was nigh at hand, but that an interval of centuries stretched out between it and the next great coming of their Lord.

The question to which I refer is this: Is there indicated in the yet unfulfilled part of this pro-

phecy a middle coming of Christ,—to be distinguished, on the one hand, from his coming to destroy Jerusalem, and to be equally distinguished, on the other, from his coming at the close of the present economy of things to judge the world? Many of our ablest expositors of Holy Writ believe that not only are traces to be discovered here of such an intermediate advent, ushering in the millennial reign, but that you cannot read this discourse consecutively and intelligently without discerning and acknowledging it. Let me refer to one or two of the proofs which this portion of Scripture, when compared with other parts of the prophetical writings, is supposed to supply in evidence of a coming of Christ anterior to and quite separate from his final coming to judge the world. In the 29th verse of the 24th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, certain premonitory signals of an advent of the Lord are given. The sun is to be darkened, the moon is not to give her light, the stars are to fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens are to be shaken. The advocates of the personal and premillennial advent of our Lord

think they can demonstrate that, according to the structure and style of language adopted in the prophetic Scriptures, these are symbolic descriptions of great commotions, changes, and revolutions, political and ecclesiastical, which are to happen on the earth. Other Scriptures about which there is less ambiguity of meaning represent these as preceding the setting up of the visible, the millennial kingdom of our Lord on earth, an event carefully to be distinguished from the final judgment-advent. As the national and religious catastrophes here symbolized are spoken of in those other passages as taking place at some intermediate point along the line that stretches out into the future, and not at nor immediately near the end of that line, so it is affirmed and believed that the coming of the Lord spoken of in the 30th, 31st, and immediately following verses of the 24th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, connected as it is with these catastrophes as its immediate precursors, cannot be the one with which the present state of things is finally to be wound up.

Again, this coming of the Lord is said to be for

the purpose, not of gathering all nations before him, but of gathering his own elect out of all the nations, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. In this gathering two are to be working in one field—the one is to be taken, the other left; two are to be grinding at one mill—the one is to be taken, the other left. The field then and the one reaper, the mill and the one grinder, are they not to be left, it is asked, as they were before? and is not this a description that applies far more naturally and truthfully to such a separation as would take place at the erection of the millennial kingdom than to the separation of the judgment-day?

It is admitted that these and all the other like traces to be met here of a distinction between the second and third advents of our Lord are obscure; but then we are reminded that this whole prophecy is constructed upon the principle of so blending together the events that it covers, and making them so overlap and run into one another, that a broader and more marked line of separation is not to be looked for. It is difficult for eyes untrained to the survey of mountainous

districts to detect the line that separates a distant range of hills from a higher one lying immediately behind it. As difficult, it is alleged, for an eye unpractised in the survey of the perspective of prophecy, as presented in the pages of the Bible, to detect that line which separates the second from the third coming of our Lord. Nevertheless, the quick-sighted and well-trained eye may in both cases be satisfied that it is a double and not a single object that is before it. In justice, besides, to the advocates of the premillennial advent, it must be added that the Scripture now before us is not the one upon which they rely as supplying anything like distinct or positive proof of such an advent. It would certainly need something much more definite than anything which meets us here to warrant the belief that such an advent is approaching. But if elsewhere in the Bible such positive proof exists, then it is alleged that the rendering of this prophetic discourse which represents it as portraying in regular sequence three judgment-comings of the Lord, opens up its meaning more fully, and gives greater order,

consistency, and harmony to it, as a whole, than any other explanation supplies.

It may be so; we are certainly not prepared to affirm or attempt to prove the opposite. In order, however, to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion on the subject, to pass a judgment on it entitled to any weight, one would require to have studied thoroughly and patiently the whole circle of the prophetic writings, to have made himself master of the peculiar kind of language, figurative and symbolical, which is there employed, and in particular to have candidly weighed and balanced the strangely conflicting testimonies that have been adduced in favour of and against the idea of a personal and premillennial advent of the Redeemer. It so happens, however, that among those who have made this province of unfulfilled prophecy their peculiar study, the most various and the most discordant opinions prevail. They differ not only in their interpretation of individual prophecies, but in the systems or methods of interpretation that they employ. For some this region of Biblical study has had a strange fascination, and once drawn into it there appears to

be a great difficulty in getting out again. Perhaps the very dimness and doubtfulness that belong to it constitute one of its attractions. The lights are but few and straggling and obscure. Yet each new entrant fancies he has found the clue that leads through the labyrinth, and with a confidence proportioned to the difficulties he imagines he has overcome, would persuade us to accompany him. Instead of inclining us the more to enter, the very number and force of these conflicting invitations serve rather to repel. We become afraid of getting beneath a spell that somehow or other operates so powerfully, so engrossingly, upon all who yield themselves to its influence.

Apart, however, from any such timidity (which would be censurable if the questions raised were ones that could be settled), I cannot think that there are sufficient materials in our hands for arriving at any clear and definite conclusion as to the time and the manner of the yet future advents of Christ. Nay more, I am convinced that it was never meant by the framer of the prophecies regarding them that any distinct vision

of the future should, by help of them, be obtained by us. They are couched in the language peculiar to prophecy, of which this is a distinctive feature,—that you cannot, by mere inspection, positively say whether each and every announcement is to be taken literally or figuratively; and, if figuratively, how it is to be fulfilled. It is so far true that the part already accomplished does put into our hand a key, by help of which the part yet unaccomplished may be partially understood. It is, however, but a little way that we can be thus helped on; for the prophecies are not framed throughout after one uniform mould or pattern, so that if you can unlock one portion, you can unlock the whole. There is such variety of construction in the different parts that much must remain of double or doubtful import, till the interpreting event occurs. It has been so with all that section of the prophetic writings of which the fulfilments are already before our eyes. It must be so with all that lies over to be accomplished in the future. Who then shall tell us beforehand what is to be taken literally and

what figuratively? In stating their case, the advocates on either side, for and against the pre-millennial advent, adduce certain passages which, taken as plain historic statements of what is hereafter to occur in the history of our globe, appear undoubtedly to prove what they are adduced to substantiate. But taken in the same way, passages are quoted on the other side which are in open conflict with these. The way in which either party attempts to remove the discordance is to assign a figurative sense to announcements which are at variance with those which they adopt as plain and simple narratives of what is to happen. All cannot be taken literally, neither can all be taken figuratively, without jars and discords; and take which side you may, it will be found that there are passages in such apparent and direct opposition to your conclusions, that you have to do violence to your own method of interpreting the others in order to get rid of their opposition. This is so unsatisfactory that on the whole we are not only disposed to hold our judgment in this matter in suspense, to wait till the event supplies the explanation,

but we are inclined to believe that the obscurities and difficulties which now stand in the way of anything like a minute interpretation of the prophecies beforehand were intentionally, and of set purpose, thrown around them by their utterer, that while there was enough to awaken inquiry and kindle hope, there might not be enough to enable any one to draw out a chronological chart of the future, or announce beforehand the exact dates of any of the great occurrences foretold. More than once our Saviour said to the disciples—and in so saying did he not teach us the chief use of prophecy?—'I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe.'[1] And did he not, in the very midst of his foretellings of his own second coming, interject the saying: 'But of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but my Father only'? Was the man Christ Jesus in the days of his humiliation himself kept in ignorance of that day and hour? It may have been so. As in childhood he grew in

[1] John xiv. 29.

wisdom, knowing things this year that he had not known the year before, so in manhood revelations of the spiritual world may have been gradually communicated, and the knowledge of that day and hour kept in reserve,—kept in the Father's own hand till after his death and resurrection. Or it may have been, that, though personally he knew, it was a knowledge not to be communicated. Anyhow, that day and hour were to have a cloud of obscurity thrown over them which neither men nor angels were to be permitted to see through.

But with all the obscurity thus intentionally thrown around the day and the hour, let us not forget that no obscurity whatever, no uncertainty whatever, hangs around the great event itself; that the same Jesus whom the clouds received out of the apostles' sight, as they gazed up after him into heaven, shall come again the second time without sin unto salvation. Putting all intervening comings out of sight, we know that he shall come at the end of the world, and we know that our death is virtually the end of the world to each

of us. In all that future which lies before us, these are the only two events of which we are absolutely certain: our own approaching death, our Lord's approaching advent. Our faith in the certainty of the one rests on the uniformity of nature; our faith in the other on the sure testimony of our Lord himself,—a testimony that we put above the other, for he says, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.' We must all die, and we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Our eyes must close for ever on this present scene; our eyes must open to the scene of Jesus Christ upon this earth as our great Judge. The same double feature belongs to both: absolute certainty as to the event, entire uncertainty as to the time. We may die to-morrow; we may not die till many years hence. Christ may come to-morrow; may not come till many centuries hence. One might have expected that with all thoughtful men who believed themselves to be immortal, who felt themselves to be sinful and accountable, this double feature of the two events—events charged with such immeasurably

important issues,—would have stimulated to constant watchfulness, would have intensified solicitude, would have served to keep us humble, keep us earnest, keep us faithful. But alas for the thoughtless, careless, unbelieving spirit that is in us: we make the very things, so fitted and intended to work in us these salutary effects, minister to indifference and unconcern. All acknowledge that we must die soon. It is the common fate, we say, and put the thought of death away. We know not what a day nor an hour may bring forth,—we are absolutely uncertain whether our next step shall fall here upon the solid earth, or there in the viewless eternity. We turn the very uncertainty into an argument for delay, and postpone preparation till the time for it may be gone. The truth is, that we naturally live here under a terrible tyranny,—the tyranny of the present, the sensible, the temporal; a tyranny but little felt by those who give themselves up willingly and wholly to its power. But, felt or unfelt, acknowledged or unacknowledged, it is one which must be met, and be overcome, if we would share the Christian

character on earth or rise to the Christian blessedness in heaven. The future must carry it over the present; the unseen over the seen; the eternal over the temporal. Here lies the trial and here lies the triumph of the faith that is in Jesus Christ; for who is he that overcometh, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ? and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith—faith in the unseen Saviour; faith in his having lived and died for us on earth; faith in his having passed into the heavens, appearing there in God's presence for us; faith in his future coming to take us to himself. By watchfulness, by prayer, by all good fidelity to our absent Lord, let us nourish this vital principle of faith within us; so that when at last, whether it be through his messenger death, or through the signals of his own personal appearance, it is said to us, 'Behold he cometh!' the ready answer of our spirit may be, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus!'

XI.

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS.[1]

Tuesday.

Two great duties lay on those to whom our Lord's prophecies as to his future advents were addressed,—watchfulness and diligence. These duties he proceededto illustrate and enforce in two parables to which a peculiar interest attaches, as spoken at such a time and to such a audience. The first of the two parables was that of the Ten Virgins.

Among the Jews the marriage ceremony was always celebrated at nightfall, and the marriage supper was given in the house of the bridegroom, and not in that of the bride. The bridegroom, accompanied by a select number of companions, his friends, goes to the house of the bride, to conduct her thence to her new home. The bride, with a corresponding attendance of com-

[1] Matt. xxv. 1-13.

panions, awaits his arrival, and then, the two bands united, the bridal procession moves on to the dwelling where the bridal feast is prepared. The ten virgins spoken of in the parable are friends of the bride, and are waiting, either at her house, or some suitable place by the way, for the announcement of the bridegroom's coming, that they may join the marriage procession, go forward with it, and sit down at the provided feast. All the ten have lamps. This in every event was necessary, as it was only by lamp-light or torch-light that the procession could move on. But these lamps of the ten virgins were not in all likelihood their own, nor carried by them only for the light they were to yield. As it was customary to provide wedding garments, so was it to provide wedding lamps,—such lamps of themselves marking out those that bore them as invited guests. Each of the ten virgins of the parable has got such an invitation to appear on this occasion as an attendant on the bride and has accepted it, and each holds in her hand the symbol of her character and office. Very likely the lamps were all of one material and pattern. Very likely the

ten bearers of these were all dressed alike, and that, looking at them as they took up together their appointed post, you might have seen but little if any difference in their outward appearance or equipment. Yet there was a great, and as it proved, a radical, a vital difference between them. Five of them were wise and five were foolish. The wise showed their wisdom in this, that they provided beforehand for a contingency which, however unlikely, they foresaw might possibly occur. The lamp furnished to them had quite enough of oil in it to last all the time that it was thought it would be needed. There was more than enough oil in it to carry the bearers from the one house to the other; and had all gone as it was at first arranged—had the bridegroom come at the usual, the set time—the marriage lamp, with the ordinary supply of oil that it contained, would have been sufficient. But to the five wise virgins the idea had occurred that it was at least within the bounds of possibility that a delay in the bridegroom's coming might take place. Some unforeseen accident might occur, some unthought-of hindrance be thrown before him on his

way. To be prepared for such delay in case it should occur, they took with them other separate vessels beside their lamps,[1] containing a supply of oil in reserve, upon which they might draw in the event of what was in the lamp itself being all consumed. The foolish virgins showed their folly in this, that they were quite satisfied with the provision of oil made for them by their inviters, and never thought of supplementing it by any additional provision of their own. Perhaps the idea of a delay in the bridegroom's coming never occurred to them. It was a thing that but rarely happened. The idea of it would not naturally or spontaneously arise. It would do so only to those who gave themselves purposely and deliberately to think over beforehand all that might happen, in order to be provided for it. Even if the possibility of some delay had occurred or been suggested to these foolish virgins, they would have satisfied themselves with thinking that it never could be so long as to burn out all the oil which their lamps contained. They were quite sure that all would go right; that the bridegroom

[1] Matt. xxv. 44.

would come at the right time; they were all too eager about the meeting, and the march, and the spread-out banquet to allow their minds to be troubled with calculating all the possible evils that might occur, and how they could be most effectually guarded against. But they were mistaken in their anticipations.

'The bridegroom tarried.' Taking the parable as a prophetical allegory, this is one of the many hints given by our Lord, even to the first disciples, that his second coming might possibly be deferred longer than they thought. He would not tell them how long; he would say nothing that should absolutely and wholly preclude the idea of his speedy advent, his coming at any time, to any generation of the living; but yet he would not have them so count upon his coming being at hand, as to make no preparation for his absence being prolonged, as to commit that species of folly chargeable upon the five foolish virgins.

And 'while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept,'—the wise and the foolish alike. Perhaps there may be a prophetic glance towards that which shall be the condition of the

world at the time of Christ's second coming—to the general surprise with which that event shall burst upon a slumbering, unexpectant earth. Whatever secondary allusion of this kind it may carry with it, you will notice that this slumbering and sleeping of all is not only what might naturally have been expected under the circumstances, but what is necessary to lead the story on to the contemplated issue. The delay had been longer than any one could have imagined. The bridegroom should have been there soon after the darkness had fallen. At midnight, had the set and common time been kept, not only would the procession have been all over, but the feast nearly finished. It had been with all the virgins a busy day, getting all things ready for so great an occasion. Was it wonderful that when, hour after hour, there was no signal of the approach, tired nature should claim her due, their excited spirits should fail and flag, their eyes get heavy, and that they should all slumber and sleep? Had there been no such sleeping, had all kept awake throughout, the foolish virgins, by the gradual consumption of the

oil within their lamps, perhaps by noticing also and reflecting on the provision in the separate vessels that their companions had made, would have become timeously aware of the danger that was at hand, and might have provided against it. On the other hand, had it been the foolish only who slept, and while they slept had the wise been watching at their side, we could not well have excused them if, when the foolish awakened, they had charged their companions with great unkindness in having suffered them to sleep on, when they must have seen the catastrophe that was impending. We are disposed, therefore, to regard this incident as thrown in, rather in order to conduct the story to its proper close, than as having any distinct and peculiar symbolic signification of its own.

At midnight the cry came: 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.' This cry rouses all the sleepers; all is haste and bustle now, as if there were an eagerness to make up for the previous delay. As they start up from their sleep, the ten virgins all see that their lamps, which they eagerly grasp, are just

dying out. With the wise it is a quick and easy thing to clear and cleanse the wick, and to pour in a fresh supply out of their auxiliary vessels. A minute or two so spent, and their lamps are burning as brilliantly as at the first. Not so with the foolish virgins. They look despairingly at their fading lights. They have no fresh oil to feed their flame. The only resource in their extremity is to apply, in all the eagerness and impatience of despair, to their companions. 'Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.' But the wise had been economic as they had been foreseeing. They had enough for themselves, but no such superabundance that they could safely and prudently supply their neighbours. 'Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.' It was the only alternative left. But, alas! it failed; for while they were away beating up the oil-sellers, and trying to make a speedy purchase, the bridegroom came; the five that were ready passed on with him in the procession, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.

The ten virgins of the parable represent so many of the professed disciples of our Lord. Their common equipment, and their common attitude, —all of them with marriage lamps in their hands, standing waiting the bridegroom's coming,—tell us of that prepared and waiting posture in which all who call themselves by the name of Christ are or ought to be found, as those who are looking for the coming and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

It would, however, be unjust to this parable, and it would involve us speedily in inextricable difficulties of interpretation, if we either took the ten virgins as representing the whole collective body of the visible Church, or took the difference of conduct here displayed, and the difference of destiny to which it led—the final separation of the five wise and five foolish—as typical of those two companies which are to stand, the one on the right hand and the other on the left of their great Judge. Christ's object here is much more limited. He is urging throughout this part of his discourse the duty of watchfulness with regard to his approaching advent; and in this parable it

is one form or kind of that watchfulness which he desires to inculcate. He does this by showing in an illustrative instance what special benefit it may be to him who practises it, and what painful consequences the absence of it may entail. The kind of watchfulness here so strikingly pressed upon our regards, and emblematically exhibited in the conduct of five of the ten virgins, is prudence, that reflective forethought, which busies itself in providing beforehand for emergencies that may possibly arise; the same virtue, transferred to spiritual things, which distinguishes the wise and the prudent of this world, who profitably spend many an hour in conjecturing what possible contingencies as to their earthly affairs may arise, and in contriving and arranging how each, if it do happen, should be met.

Among the children of the kingdom, the wise and the prudent are they who, having been called to that marriage-supper of the Lamb, and having received the gracious invitation to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, prize the invitation so highly, and are so anxious that nothing should defraud them of

the eternal blessedness to which it points, that they give themselves with all diligence to the consideration of all the possible risks that might come in the way of its finally being made good to them, and to the best methods of guarding against them should they occur. They look beyond the present, they anticipate evil before it comes, they strive to secure themselves against surprise, to stand forearmed to meet each enemy. Opposed to them, and answering to the foolish virgins of this parable, are those thoughtless disciples, who, satisfied with having got the invitation, and with being ranked among the number of the invited, foresee no danger, take no precaution, and make no provision against it. We do not doubt that, underlying that distinction between such wisdom and such folly, which it is the special and exclusive design of the parable to show forth, there is another broader, deeper, and more radical distinction,—even that which separates the nominal from the real, the false from the true professor of Christianity. You will soon find, however (as numberless interpreters have done), that if you make that broader and deeper distinction, the one

here set forth, you will not be able, except by the use of great and unseemly violence, to make the story tally with the interpretation. A lamp is about as good an emblem of visible Christianity as one could wish, and so it is very natural to regard the ten lamp-bearers of the parable as standing as representatives of the entire visible Church; and the oil which feeds the lamp is also an apt emblem of that special quickening grace of God's Spirit (frequently in the Bible spoken of as an anointing with oil), the infusion of which into the heart makes the true Christian to differ from the mere nominal professor. But if that were the difference intended to be symbolized here by the lamp and the oil, it ought to be a lamp without any oil, or a lamp with a different kind of oil in it, which represented the mere nominal profession, the show without the substance of true piety. But not only are the lamps of all the ten virgins alike, they are all filled at first, and filled with the same kind of oil, and burn with the same kind of flame. It is not for bringing with them oil-less, lightless lamps, it is not for filling them with some

spurious kind of liquid, sending up only smoke and stench instead of the pure and lambent flame, that the foolish virgins suffer so great a loss. It is simply and solely for not having a sufficient supply of the oil laid up beforehand. If, notwithstanding the difficulty which stands in the way of such interpretation arising from the fact that the foolish as well as the wise have some oil in their lamps, we still cling to the idea—which it is difficult for us to discard, it is so just and so pleasing—that this oil does represent the grace of the Holy Spirit, would not the fair and indeed only conclusion from this parable be, that there is a certain equal measure of this grace bestowed at first on all alike, such as Romanists believe to be bestowed at baptism, and that the difference between the lost and saved, between true and false Christians, hinges not on the kind but on the quantity of the grace possessed, on the one laying up a separate and sufficient stock beforehand, on the other neglecting to do so? But even were we prepared for such a view of the parable as would involve such consequences, where could the spiritual parallel

be found to the separate vessels in which the reserve supply is treasured?

Instead then of taking the oil as an emblem of the Spirit's regenerating grace, and the lamp as an emblem of the outward form or profession of discipleship, and then trying to give a correspondent spiritual meaning to the different incidents of the story, and to make the difference finally brought out between the wise and the foolish virgins tally with the difference between all those into whose hearts the heavenly grace has come, and all in whom it is wanting,—is it not wiser and better here, as in the interpretation of so many of our Lord's parables, to confine the parable within its own proper bounds, and, looking at its broad and general object, to take it as designed to impress upon our hearts the great need of a wise and watchful forethought, the great danger to which the want of this forethought exposes, the sad and awful issues to which it may conduct?

Let us return now to the parable, and take up the closing incidents about the marriage, as to which there can be no uncertainty. 'The bride-

groom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage.' The future, the everlasting blessedness in store for all true followers of Christ, is spoken of here, as so frequently elsewhere, as a royal banquet or feast. 'Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.' Scene of unrivalled glory, of exhaustless joy; rich and rare the food provided for the guests in the great banqueting-hall of immortality! Other viands at other feasts soon pall on the sated sense; but for those viands upon which the spirits of the blessed shall for evermore be nourished up into a growing likeness unto God, the appetite shall ever grow quicker the more that is partaken, and the relish be ever the more intense. The companionship at other festivals finally wearies; sooner or later we begin to desire that it should close; but in the hallowed unions and fellowships that shall be there, new sources of interest, new springs of delight shall be ever opening, each coming to know the other better, and each fresh access of knowledge bringing fresh access of love, and confidence, and joy. Other feasts are broken up,

and sad and dreary is the hall where hundreds met in buoyant joy, when, the guests all gone, the lights grow dim, and darkness and loneliness take the place of the bright smile and ringing laugh. But that marriage supper of the Lamb shall know no breaking up, its tables shall never be withdrawn, its companionship shall never end.

'They that were ready went in: and *the door was shut.*' What a surprise, what a disppointment, the five foolish virgins must have met with when they came and found that already the bridal party had entered, the bridal supper had commenced, and that the door was closed against their entrance! They had been invited to this marriage feast, and they had accepted this invitation, as special friends of the bride. The idea of their being excluded from the banquet had never entered into their minds, no, not even after their lamps had gone out. True, they had not taken the same precaution with their wiser companions, but who could have predicted so tedious a delay? True, they had not been able to join the procession at the first, but now they

have got fresh oil, and their lamps are burning as brightly as at first. The door is closed against them—surely by inadvertence; it had not been perceived that they still were wanting to complete the company. They knock, the door opens not; they hear the bridegroom's own voice within, the very voice of their inviter. With an eagerness in which fear begins to mingle, they cry out, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' The only answer they get is, 'Verily, I know you not;' an answer which too plainly tells them that within that joyous dwelling they never shall set foot.

The warning here strikes home upon us all. We too have heard the invitation of our Saviour, and outwardly have accepted it. Our Christianity may be such as shall stand well enough the scrutiny of our neighbours, and as may open to us without any right of challenge admission to the table of communion. But how many are there among such professors of Christianity for whom a surprise as unexpected and as terrible is in reserve as met those foolish virgins! The man who never fears that it may be so with him at the last, who can hear about the door of heaven

being shut against those who, up to the last, expected to get in, and no trembling apprehension come upon his spirit that he himself may be among that number, is the very man in whose person that terrible catastrophe is most likely to be realized. When we know that there is so great a possibility, nay, we may say, so great a probability of self-deception; when we believe that so many have practised that self-deception on themselves throughout life, and never have awakened from its illusions till they stood before that door of heaven and found it closed against them for ever;—how diligent in self-scrutiny should each of us now be; how anxious that he possess not the name only, but the disposition, the character, the habits, the conduct of a true follower of Jesus Christ! Let us apply then to ourselves those most impressive words of Christ,—'Not every one that saith to me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father that is in heaven. Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy

name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.'

But that door which Christ himself here tells us will be closed at last against so many, is it not now open unto all? Yes. It stands before us, invitingly near, most easy of access, with this blessed inscription written over it, in characters so large that he who runs may read: 'Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' How different in this respect from those other doors at which you see so many of our race stand knocking,—the doors that lead to wealth, or fame, or ease and pleasure! These doors stand so far back, away from where the multitude are naturally standing, that many, in the rush and throng and pressure never get near them, though they toil to do so all their lives. Close in upon and around each of them what crowds are gathered, knocking so eagerly, so impatiently, often with such impetuous violence! They open, however, to but a few of all this number. For one that finds entrance there are hundreds that

are kept without. Why is it that the great multitude will still keep rushing to these doors that remain shut against so many, while so few try that other door that remains closed against none? Is it that this gate to which our Saviour points us is so strait, the way that he would have us walk in, is so narrow? True, the gate is strait,—but strait, why, and to whom?—Strait, indeed impossible to pass through, to all who come to it environed with the thick wrapping of pride and worldliness and the spirit of self-trust. But strip yourselves of these, come naked and bare of them, come in all humility, with a broken and a contrite heart, and you will not find it strait, but most easy of passage. True, the way is narrow, narrow for each individual traveller; but who that ever tried to tread it would wish it to be broader, to be so wide as to suffer him unchecked to wander away from God, or lapse into any transgression of that law which is so holy, and just, and good? Narrow as it is to each, that way has breadth enough for all to walk in it without any of that jostling, and striving, and sore

competing toil which mark the broader way that so many take.

Enter ye in at that strait gate. Walk ever humbly, diligently, with careful footstep, with watchful wisdom on that narrow way, and then let the alarm rise when and how it may; let the cry strike the ear, 'Behold, he cometh!' No shut door shall be before you. For you, as for your great Forerunner, for you because you follow him, the everlasting doors shall be lifted up, and the glad welcome given: 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

XII.

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.[1]

Tuesday.

THE parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, afford material for very interesting and instructive comparison and contrast. They were delivered at different times, in different circumstances, and they carry with them internal evidence of these diversities. The parable of the pounds[2] was the last delivered by our Lord out of Jerusalem, that of the talents the last delivered in it. Jesus was on his way up to Jerusalem on the occasion of his last visit to the holy city. He had reached and passed through Jericho; large numbers had been attracted to him, who were full of vague expectation; and it was because they thought that the kingdom of heaven should immediately ap-

[1] Matt. xxv. 14-30. [2] Luke xix. 11-28.

pear that he spake the parable of the pounds. That parable, as originally delivered, had a much wider scope and bearing than the parable of the talents. It was meant as a warning to the whole nation of the Jews, embracing those of that nation who were to receive and those who were to reject Jesus as the Messiah. He knew well the shock to which his approaching death and disappearance would expose all those whose ideas and hopes regarding him had been of an entirely secular character. He foresaw the latent enmity to him which would break out as soon as he was removed; and he knew also the many perils to which his own disciples would be exposed by so sudden and unexpected a departure,—the evils which his continued absence was likely to produce. In the prophetic picture which the parable of the pounds holds up, both friends and enemies are introduced, and to both appropriate premonitions are given. Christ likens himself to a nobleman going into a far country to receive a kingdom, and to return. The idea is no doubt borrowed from Archelaus and others of the Idumean family going to Rome to be invested with

the royal authority, and returning to Judea to be acknowledged as the lawful sovereign. In going away, the nobleman calls his ten servants, the whole body of his domestics, and gives each of them a pound, saying, 'Occupy till I come.' But the action of the parable is not confined to those servants of the nobleman; it takes in all those citizens besides, who so soon as his back is turned, whatever may have been their dispositions and conduct towards him when he was there in person among them, break out into open and undisguised hostility, and go the length even of sending a messenger after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' Again, on the return of the nobleman, having received the kingdom, after reckoning with his servants, and seeing and rewarding the diligence of those who had made a good improvement of the money committed to their care, the king calls for those his enemies who would not that he should reign over them, and has them slain in his presence. In the conduct of the citizens, and in the punishment of those who cast off his rule, the parable of the pounds embraces a class not covered by

that of the talents, which has throughout to do alone with the master and his servants. This latter parable was delivered, not to a mixed audience, but to one singularly select. It was not merely that none but disciples were present, none of those for whom that branch of the story about rebellious citizens and their punishment was intended,—there were none but apostles present. Now, corresponding to this, let us notice, that Christ stands represented here by a master who, on leaving, calls, it is said, his own servants, those who were his servants in some closer or more peculiar sense than was the case with ordinary domestics; and of those there are but three, —both name and number indicating that it is Christ's connexion with those who, like the apostles, were admitted to closer relationship, and had bestowed on them peculiar privileges, which is here more particularly illustrated. And this view of the more limited embrace of the parable of the talents is confirmed when we compare what the ten servants (the wider household of the nobleman), and the three servants (the personal attendants of their master), have committed

to them, on the occasion of his departure. The ten, the more numerous body—representative, therefore, as we conceive, of the general body of disciples—get all alike: each a single pound, a pound being but the twentieth part of a talent. It is the common possession, the common property, the common privileges of all disciples, what each and all of them have had bestowed on them by their great Master in the heavens, which is here set forth. On the other hand, the one, the two, the five talents given to each of the three servants, represent the larger but more special donations conferred, not on all alike, but in singular variety and in unequal proportions. That such peculiar bestowments of the divine grace are here pointed at may still further appear from what is said about each of the three getting one, or two, or five talents,—each man *according to his ability*,—his natural capabilities, whatever they may be, not forming part of the talent or talents committed to his trust, but rather forming the ground and measure upon which, and in proportion to which, these are bestowed. As this master has three servants to whom,

according to their original ability, he intrusts a larger portion of his goods than he would commit to ordinary servants, so the Great Master of the spiritual household has those to whom, in the wider spheres of opportunity and of influence opened up to them, in the richer spiritual gifts and graces bestowed, qualifying them to fill those spheres, he assigns a higher function, as he looks for a corresponding and commensurate return.

Such seem to be legitimate enough conclusions from the different audiences to which the two parables were addressed, the different ends they were designed to gain, the different structure of their opening sections. Of far greater importance, however, than the tracing of any such nice distinctions—in which it is quite possible that we may go too far, is it to fix our thoughts upon that common, general, universal lesson embodied in both these parables. All of us who have made the Christian profession acknowledge ourselves as servants of an absent Lord. He has temporarily withdrawn from us his visible presence, but he has not left us with the bonds of our servitude lightened or relaxed. So

far from this, do not these parables very clearly and significantly point to something peculiar in the interval betwixt his withdrawal and return, marking it off as one of special probation? Let us remember that it is from the relationship which of old existed between a master and his slaves that the imagery of these parables is taken. A slave in those days might not only be called to do the ordinary work, household or out-of-doors, which fell to the lot of an ordinary domestic; but if he had the talent for it, or were trustworthy, his master might allow him to engage in trade, or to practise in any profession, the master receiving the profits, the slave reaping the benefit of better position and better maintenance. Were such a master, on going away for a considerable period from his home and country, to give three of his slaves who were thus employed, full and unchecked liberty in his absence to follow the bent of their own taste and talent, instead of prescribing for each of them a certain kind and amount of work which, under the eye of his overseer, day by day, and week by week, they were to perform, we would speak of

this as liberal treatment, as a mark on his part of trust and confidence. But if, still further, such a master, on the eve of his departure, were to summon his slaves into his presence, and supply them with a larger or a smaller capital to operate on, which capital they were left at perfect freedom to employ each as he pleased, provided only that he employed it always as his master's capital, and kept the returns as his master's profits, whether such a procedure on the master's part be assigned to a selfish or to a generous motive, most certainly it would place the servant in a new and peculiarly responsible position—put him upon a special probation. Such is the position which all true servants of the Saviour occupy; and such the probation to which they are now exposed. Our Master is not here personally to assign to us our different places and our different work; he is not here directly to inspect, and day by day, at each day's close, to call us into his presence and make the reckoning with us. He has retired from the platform of this visible creation; but not the less, rather indeed the more, are we under obligation to work for and

to work under him; for has he not treated us with a generous liberality? has he not left us so to deal with that portion of his goods he has put into our hands as to each of us seemeth wisest and best? has he not left us to cultivate each the special talent he has bestowed? and broad and varied as the field of human effort, so broad and varied has he not made that field, in cultivating which we may still be serving him? has he not even warned us,—however different our ways of life,—against judging one another, saying to us, 'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth'? And has he not generously dealt out to us of his goods, leaving none of us, no, not the youngest, the weakest, the poorest, the least gifted, bankrupt of the means to serve him, without the single pound? The one, the two, the five talents, have they not been lavishly conferred? And we have accepted all as put into our hands by him, as still his; as ours only to be used for him as he desires. That, and no less, lies involved in our very profession as Christians.

'The Lord Jesus Christ, whose I am and

whom I serve,'—one of the best and briefest descriptions of discipleship; yet how much does it include! All the greatest religious ideas and beliefs are simple; the difficulty lying not in the intellectual conception, but in the practical realization of them. Is it not so with the idea that we are servants, stewards having nothing that we can absolutely call our own; nothing that we are left at liberty to dispose of irrespective of the will of the Sovereign Proprietor in the heavens. Easy enough in thought to embrace this idea; easy enough in words to embody it; not difficult to get an acknowledgment of it from every one who has any faith in God or Christ; it is so natural, so necessary a conclusion from the position in which we and our Creator, we and our Redeemer, stand to one another. But truly, habitually, practically, to carry the idea out; to regard our time, our wealth, our faculties, our influence, as all given us to be spent and exercised under the abiding, controlling conviction that they are ours but in loan, held by us but in trust,—another's property assigned to us to be administered agreeably to his will and for his good

and glory; let us all be ready at once to say how difficult we have felt it to frame our doings upon this principle; to live and act as the servants of that Master to whom, ere very long, we shall have to give in the strict account as to how every portion of that capital which he advanced was employed. The sense of accountability is universally felt—is so wrought into the tissue of our moral nature that you cannot extract it thence without the destruction of our moral being. Yet, alas! more or less with all of us, is it not as the voice of one crying in vain in the market-place, a voice pleading for the divine ownership over us, to which we render, when we pause to listen to it, the homage of respectful consent, but which is drowned and lost amid the other nearer, louder, more vehement voices which salute our ear?

But let us turn now to the reckoning and the reward. In the parable of the pounds,—on the nobleman's return, he calls for those servants to whom he had given the money, to see how much each had gained by trading. The first servant approaches and says, 'Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said,

Well done, thou good servant; thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.' A second servant says, 'Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.' He repeats the same words to him, 'Well done, thou good servant; thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over five cities.' In the parable of the talents,—the first servant comes and says, 'Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said to him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.' The second comes and says, 'Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.'

We have but to put the two narratives together to bring out the distinction which is made in the reward conferred upon the two servants

in the parable of the pounds, and the absence of any such distinction in the case of the two servants in the parable of the talents. He who of one pound had made ten, gets the lordship over ten cities; he who of one pound had made five, gets the lordship over five,—an exact proportion kept between the service rendered, the increase effected, and the reward bestowed. But he who doubled his two talents, though putting a less amount of gain into his master's hand, yet in the way of improvement of his powers and opportunities had done as much as he who doubled his five. You find no difference, accordingly, made between them; the praise and the award is the same with both. One can scarcely believe that the variation here is accidental and insignificant, it carries with it so striking a verification of the divine declaration, 'Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.'

But while the primary and direct reward is thus meted out in such exact proportion to the zeal, fidelity, and success with which the original gift is employed, yet when the lost pound and the lost talent came to be disposed of, they are each at

once handed over to the one who had most already, without respect to the previous service or increase. Had these been taken into account, he who out of two talents had gained other two would have had as good a claim to the forfeited talent as he who out of five talents had gained other five, whilst he who of one pound had made five, would have been entitled to a proportionate share of the disposable pound. All such claims, however, are overlooked. It is to him that hath the most that it is given, that he may have the more abundantly. In the curiously modified structure of these two parables, by that wherein they agree and that wherein they differ,—how strikingly is the double lesson taught, that while each man's proper and direct reward shall exactly tally with his proper and individual work, yet that in the distribution of extra or additional favours regard shall be had to existing position, existing possessions, existing capability;—that the awards of Heaven shall be adjusted in duplicate proportion to the service previously rendered, and to the capacity presently possessed.

Let us not pass without remark the free and

unconstrained, the warm and generous commendation which is expressed in the 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' Doubtless there had been deficiencies; these servants had not always been as diligent as they might have been; many an opportunity had they let slip unimproved; many a time had they been idle when they should have been active, slothful when they should have been watchful; and even in their most diligent endeavours to turn to best account their master's means, an eye that very curiously scanned all their motives might easily have detected imperfections and flaws. But their generous Lord and Master does not in the day of reckoning go back thus upon the past to drag out of it all that could be brought up against them. He takes the gross result, and sees in it the proof and evidence of a prevailing fidelity. Ungrudgingly, and without any drawback, he pronounces his sentence of commendation and bestows his rich rewards. No earthly lord or master, in fable or in fact, on any day of reckoning, ever dealt so generously with those who had tried to serve him, as our heavenly Lord and Master will deal with us, if honestly, sincerely,

devotedly, yet with all our manifold imperfections, we give ourselves to the doing of his good and holy will.

These good and faithful servants thus commended and thus rewarded, are they not held out as examples and encouragements? Is it wrong then to work the work of him that hath sent us into this world, or to be animated to increased diligence in that work, in order that we too may receive a similar commendation and share a like reward? Does any caution and reserve in the employment of such an argument,—the holding out of such an inducement,—mark the writings of the New Testament? Do the inspired teachers, when they hold up the rewards of immortality before our eyes, surround the exhibition with warnings against the imagination that any work of man can have any worth or be at all rewardable in the sight of God? Do they think it necessary to check and to guard every appeal of this kind which is made by them? Listen to the manner in which St. Paul speaketh on this subject: 'Let no man beguile you of your reward. Be not deceived, God is not

mocked. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, and he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.' Hear the manner in which St. Peter speaketh to those who had obtained like precious faith with himself, 'Wherefore, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. . . For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' 'Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.' Above all listen to the frequency, the particularity, the earnestness with which our Lord and Saviour himself urges this consideration upon

his disciples. Would he comfort them under the world's reproach? 'Blessed are ye,' he says, 'when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.' Would he warn them against ostentation in religion,—against being led away by the example of those who, by making long prayers, prayers in the synagogues and corners of the streets, enjoyed a large popular reputation for piety? 'But thou, when thou prayest,' he says, 'enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.' Would he stir them up to works of love, to deeds of compassion? 'He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward; and whosoever shall give a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward.' Nor has the Saviour's

language changed, when after his ascension he shows himself to the beloved disciple. Among the latest of all Christ's reported words are these —'Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.' Is heaven, then, to be represented as a place our right to enter which is to be won by our good works? No; to set forth heaven as a reward to be secured by human effort, by human worth, is a very different thing from setting forth a reward in heaven as that which is to crown every act of love and service which the Christian renders. Scripture never does the former. The sinner's acceptance with God, his title to eternal life, it attributes solely and exclusively to the merits of the Redeemer. From the office of justifying us in God's sight, our own works, of whatever kind they be, are absolutely and utterly excluded. But this does not imply that all the works of one who has not been justified, are utterly valueless and vile.

The strict morality of that young man whom Jesus looked on, and whom Jesus loved, was not thus valueless, was not thus vile in the Redeemer's sight, and neither should it be in ours. Still less does it imply that the works of one who has been justified can have no such worth or merit as to be in any way rewardable. In the strictest sense of the term, no creature, however high and holy, can merit anything at the hands of its Creator—that is, claim anything from God properly as his due; for what has he that he has not received? and whatever he do, he does but what God has a right to claim from him, and which consequently can give him no right to claim anything of God. But in that secondary sense in which alone we speak of worth, merit, rewardability, as attaching to human character, to human actions, you find in Holy Writ that the true Christian's works of faith and labours of love are spoken of as sacrifices acceptable, well pleasing to God, drawing after them here and hereafter a great reward.

There is no danger of urging to Christian work by a respect to the recompense of that re-

ward in heaven which it shall bring hereafter in its train, if only we have a right conception of what kind of work it is that is there rewarded, and what kind of reward it is that it entails.

Had the servants in either of those parables which we have now before us been trading with the pounds or with the talents, in the belief that these were their own, or with the view of keeping the whole profits that they realized to themselves, the 'Well done, good and faithful servant' would never have been pronounced on them, and into their hands no reward of any kind should in the day of reckoning have been put.

'Lord, *thy* pound hath gained ten pounds,'—the one pound was his lord's at the beginning, and the ten pounds are his lord's at the end. It is this fidelity and zeal in the management of another's property for another's behoof which is rewarded by the lordship over the ten cities. And even so is it of all spiritual service rendered unto Christ. Whatever is its outward form, however like to that which Christ requires, yet if it spring from a selfish or mercenary motive, if it be done with no other aim than to secure a personal

advantage, it comes not within the range of that economy of reward which Christ has instituted in his kingdom.

Again, the rewards which the good and faithful servants are represented here as receiving, consist in their elevation to rule and authority,—a rule and authority not absolute or independent, not to be exercised for their own individual glory or their own individual good,—a rule and authority to be held by them but as under-governors, in subjection still to their Lord and Master, and to be exercised by them for the good of his great empire. The reward consists but in a higher species of the same kind of service which they had rendered. The wages they have earned are made up of a larger quantity and a higher kind of work. You may bribe a man to diligent and continued labour in a work to which he has no heart, and under a master whom he cares little or nothing for, by holding out a tempting wage; but then the wage must be different from the work, a wage of a kind which the man covets, for a work to which he is indifferent, or which is distasteful. But who

would enter the service of any master, if the only wage that was offered was so much more work to do? who but he who loved the work for the work's sake and the master's sake, and to whom, in consequence of that love to him and it, no more tempting offer could be held out than a larger sphere of labour and a larger power to fill it? Such, and no other, are the terms of the Christian service. Such, and no other, the wages that our Heavenly Master holds out to all the labourers in his earthly vineyard. Do you love that Master with all your heart? Is it the highest aim of your being to serve him? Is it the deepest joy of your heart when you are able to do him any service? Then, toiling labourer, look onward, upward to your heavenly reward. Now you often have but little liking to the spiritual service. Then your liking for it shall be so strong, you will never be able to keep your hand for a moment from the doing of it. Lazily, impurely, imperfectly is the work executed now; ardently, unremittingly, perfectly shall it be done then, and in such doing you shall enter into the joy of your Lord.

XIII.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.[1]

Tuesday.

'GOD hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead.' 'The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son.' 'We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.'—We might have imagined that all the ends of a judgment to come might have been gained by its taking effect on each separate spirit on its passage after death into the presence of the Great Judge, its consignment thereafter to its appropriate condition. Besides this, however, we are taught that there is to be a time, a day specially set apart—at the resurrection from the dead, for the public, simultaneous judgment of our whole race. Having warned his

[1] Matt. xxv. 31-34.

disciples of its approach, Jesus proceeds to describe some of this great day's incidents.

His final advent for judgment is to take the world by surprise. It is to come as in the night the thief cometh, as in the day the flash of lightning bursts from the bosom of the thunder-cloud. The day before its last shall see nothing unusual in the earth. Over one-half the globe the stir and bustle of life shall be going on as in the days before the flood. They shall be eating and drinking, buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage; the market-places full of eager calculators, the fields of toiling labourers, the homes of thoughtless, happy groups. In the quiet churchyard the group of mourners shall be gathered round the last opened grave, the coffin shall have reached its resting-place, and the hand of the gravedigger be raised to pour the kindred earth upon the dead.

Over the other half of the globe the inhabitants shall have gone to rest; the merchant dreaming of to-morrow's gains, the senator of his next day's oration. Awake in his solitary chamber the student shall be writing at his desk; and in

the banquet-room the lights shall be glittering, and the inviting table spread, and dance and song and ringing laughter shall be there. Just then, without herald sent or note of warning given, the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. That shout, that trumpet-call of heaven—that only sound that ever spanned at once the globe, and was heard the same moment at either pole,—how at its fearful summons shall the sleepers start up, their dreamings all cut short! The pen shall drop from the writer's hand; and a shivering terror, like that which filled Belshazzar's hall, shall run through the banquet-room, and the jest half uttered, the song half sung, they shall stare at one another in pale affright! In the thronging market-place the buyer shall forget the price he offered, the seller the price he asked: in the toiling harvest-field, the stooping reaper shall look up, and as he looks, the last cut grain of earth shall drop out of his hand; and in the quiet churchyard the work of burial shall be stopped, and the mourners shall see a strange com-

motion in the grave; for it shall do more, that trumpet-blast of judgment, than waken all the sleeping, arrest all the waking inhabitants of the globe. It shall go where sound never went; it shall do what sound never did: it shall penetrate the stony monument; it shall pierce the grassy mound. Far down through many a fathom of the heaving waters shall it descend; over the deep bed of ocean shall it roll. And at its summons the sea shall give up the dead that are in it; and death and Hades the dead that are in them. Raised from their graves, the dead, both small and great, shall stand before the Lord. They shall 'be caught up to meet the Lord in the air;' lifted up above that earth upon which the renovating fire shall already be preparing to do its work. What a strange assemblage! The babe that had been born but an hour before; the ancient man who, in the times before the flood, had lived for nigh a thousand years; the first buried, the last buried, the half-buried,—all the vast congregation of the dead mingling with the hosts of the living. And this great company, as it rises to meet the Lord in the air, is to approach

another, it may be as large, descending from the heavens. For when the Son of Man shall come in his glory to judge the earth, 'all his holy angels' are to come with him. Heaven for the time is as it were to empty itself of its inhabitants; their shining ranks are to line the skies, their bright forms bending in eagerness over the impending scene. And yet another company, of other aspect, is to be there—those angels 'which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day:' Hell from beneath moved to meet the Lord at his coming; its demon hosts drawn up unwillingly into close proximity with those who once in the ages long gone by had been their associates in the heavenly places. Hell and heaven brought thus for once together, with earth coming in between, that from its intervening companies each may draw to itself all it can claim as properly its own, and then, with a contrast heightened by the temporary contact and the fresh accessions gained, to part for ever.

Soon as all the nations are gathered before him, the Judge shall send forth his angels, and

by their agency shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, and 'he shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left.' This separation shall take place in silence. Child shall meet that day with parent, and friend with long-lost friend; and parent shall part from child, and friend from friend;—no welcomes given, no questions asked, no farewells taken. On him who fills that throne, set there for judgment, shall every eye be fixed, and in stillness deep as death shall each ear wait to drink in the sentence from his lips. Then, as in this mute and awful expectation all are standing, 'shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Every clause, almost every word here, is rich in meaning.

'Then shall the King say'—it is a king, it is *the* King, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, who speaks. Visibly now before the assembled universe shall Jesus of Nazareth be enthroned. He who when here with us on earth, veiled his glory, took no higher title than the Son of Man,

was content to stand before an earthly judgment-seat and be doomed to die,—shall come now with power and great glory. He shall come, as we are told in one place, in his own glory; as we are told in another, in the glory of the Father. With all the essential glory of his native divinity, even that glory which he had with the Father before the world was,—with all the additional accumulated glory accruing to him in virtue of his having triumphed over death and hell for us men and for our salvation, shall he be then visibly invested. He shall 'sit upon the throne of his glory.' What this throne is as to its outward form and splendour, it may be idle to imagine. It is described in one scripture as a great white throne. Daniel, speaking of the appearance of the Son of Man, says that 'his throne was like the fiery flame.' He is to come, we are distinctly told, in the clouds of heaven. It was in a cloud that Jesus was borne up out of the apostles' sight as they gazed up towards heaven as he went up, and the two men in white apparel, who stood by them, said, 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up

into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.'[1] It may be on a cloud-woven throne that Jesus shall then appear. If so, the clouds that form it shall have a brilliance brighter far than that of any which have ever floated in our skies; their splendour caught not from the shining on them of a far-distant sun, but coming from an inner glory too bright for human gaze, of which their richest lustre is but a dim shadow —that shadow serving as a veil to shade and drape it, so as human eye may look upon it. But whatever its substance, whatever its form, it shall be in sight of all, a throne—the throne of judgment, to whose occupant the great and solemn work, one for which omniscience is needed, which the Omniscient alone could properly discharge, has been committed. Doubts have been entertained by some of the true and proper divinity of Jesus Christ. When he comes, and is seen seated upon that throne with that royal retinue of angels around him, and under-

[1] Acts i. 11.

takes and executes that mighty office of the Judge of all the earth, shall any doubts of his divinity be cherished then? How suitable a thing in the arrangements of the divine government does it appear, that he who submitted to all the scorn and the contumely, the suffering and the death, for our redemption, should thus, at the winding up of the world's affairs, have assigned to him this office of trust and honour; that to him every knee should be made then to bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

'The king shall say to those on his right hand.' To them he first shall turn, on them he shall first fix his eye; and when he takes the survey of that countless host stretching far and wide away, till it mingles with the crowd of angels gathering in and pressing near to those whom they wait to hail as members of the holy, happy family of the blessed, shall the spirit of the Redeemer not rejoice? In sight of the multitude that no man can number, from every kindred, and tribe, and people, and nation, all ransomed from sin and death through him, shall

he not see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied? It may be,—none can tell,—over the very scenes of his earthly sorrows that he shall then hover. The approach to this world must be made along some definite line, towards some definite locality. And what more natural, what more likely, than that the throne should rest above the eminence on which the cross once stood? And if, as he once more nears the places,—now seen for the last time, ere they pass away amid dissolving fires,—the sorrows of the great agony and death that he there endured should rise up to his thoughts, would not the sight of that goodly company of the redeemed on his right hand make the very memory of them to minister an abounding joy? He shall not be insensible to the triumph of his humiliation unto death which that day shall disclose. It shall be with no unmoved or unrejoicing spirit that he shall say, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'

He shall say '*Come*,' with what different feeling, with what a different effect, from what once

attended the utterance of the same word! He had said once to all the sinful children of men, 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest.' But he had to accompany and to follow up the gracious invitation with the sad and sorrowful exclamation, 'Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.' But no danger now of this invitation being rejected, no sorrow to shade the spirit of him who gives it. With all the exultation of one who asks those to come whom he knows will be all ready rejoicingly to follow, does he utter the gracious word. 'Come,' he says; and each footstep is ready to advance, and each mansion in heaven 'echoes back the invitation, as if impatient to receive its guest.'

'Come, ye blessed of my Father.' His redeemed are not to be recognised as those who have been plucked by him out of the hand of an angry God, whom it has taken the very utmost of service and sacrifice on his part to appease and propitiate. They are the blessed of the Father, equally as they are the ransomed of the Son. It is with the Father's full approval that they are invited to the realms of bliss. His pity, love,

and mercy provided the lamb for the sacrifice; and now that the first intentions of the redemption have been fulfilled in them by their entering into peace with him, and their drinking in of the spirit of his dear Son, his infinite benignity but waits to bless them in the full enjoyment of himself throughout all eternity. 'Ye blessed of my Father.' Here he pronounces the blessing who has power to make it good. We ask God's blessing on those we love; but, alas! we have not that blessing at command. It is often but the vague wish of a kindly nature for others' happiness which takes that form. It is at best but the expression of a desire, the offering of a petition, which it remains with another to grant or to refuse. But to be called the blessed of the Father by Christ the Son, this is to be made the very thing they are pronounced to be; and blessed for ever shall they be of him who made heaven and earth, whose large capacity to bless shall open all its stores, and lavish upon them all its bounties.

'Inherit the kingdom.' It is a kingdom, nothing less than a kingdom, that is to be entered

on, possessed, enjoyed. To rise to be a king is the highest object of earthly ambition. To ascend a throne is to reach the highest summit of earthly elevation. A crown is the richest ornament the human brow can wear. And what is the burden of the song of praise of the redeemed? 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.' And what saith the Lord himself to all his faithful followers? 'To him that overcometh will I give to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.' 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' Whether in the condition of the redeemed hereafter there shall be anything of an outward kind, of position and prerogative, of authority and rule, corresponding to those of the kingly estate, we need not now inquire. A few dim and scattered hints upon this subject do meet our eye in the sacred Scriptures, upon which, if it were cautiously attempted, some plausible enough conjectures

might be grounded. There is one kingdom, however, that we know of, into full possession of which those on the right hand of the Judge shall enter, the glory and the blessedness of which need no outward accompaniment to enhance them —the kingdom of which Jesus spake when he said, 'The kingdom of God is within you;' that kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Within the heart of every true Christian this kingdom is even now set up and established. But here, even in its best estate, the empire of God and Christ, of truth, of love, of holiness, is a sadly distracted and divided one. It is sustained by constant conflict; harassing always the inward strife, and varied the fortunes of this changeful war. But rejoice, all ye who have enlisted in this noblest of all conflicts, who, following Christ, with him as your great leader and exemplar ever before you, day by day are carrying on this inward warfare. The rule of your spirit, the empire of your heart, you have given to the Lord that bought you, and his finally, undividedly, for ever it shall be. The struggle is not to last for ever. The enemies, so

many, so powerful, within and without, by whom you are so often overcome, are not for ever to haunt and harass and assault. At death they shall be driven from the field; after death they shall cease to have all power, and then, when on that great day you stand on the right hand of the Judge, then shall the full, the perfect, the undivided reign of holiness commence, and in every thought and affection and desire of your heart doing willing homage to the Redeemer, in every faculty of your being going forth in the utmost intensity of its exercise rejoicingly to do his will, the kingdom shall be yours, Christ shall reign in you, and you shall reign through him.

But this kingdom is to come to you by inheritance. It is not one that you are to win by your own efforts, that you are to acquire as if by right in virtue of any sacrifices made, any labours undergone, any victories achieved. It is to become yours by heirship, by the will of another, bestowed upon you as his children. You must first become children of God by faith that is in Jesus Christ, and, being children, then shall ye be heirs, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

The title to the heavenly inheritance links itself at once and inseparably with our vital union to Christ our living Head. Let Christ be ours by a humble trust, a loving embrace, a dutiful submission, then heaven is ours by consequence as natural and necessary as the son is heir to the possessions of his parent. Look ever, then, on that rich inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, as the blood-bought purchase of the cross, the full completed title to which is one of the things freely given you of God in Christ, to be instantly and gratefully received in the very moment of your first believing. Let your hope of heaven base itself thus from the first firmly upon Christ, and it shall grow up into strength, and be indeed the anchor of your soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil.

The kingdom 'prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' The preparation of this kingdom for us, of us for this kingdom, is no secondary, no subsidiary device, no afterthought of God. The redemption that is through Jesus Christ our Lord is not to be thought of by us as

a scheme or plan fallen upon simply to meet and mitigate the evils of the Fall. The primary, the parent, the eternal purpose of the Supreme in the creation and government of the world, was to make and fashion here the materials out of which a kingdom was to be erected, to stand throughout eternity a glorious monument of his wisdom, mercy, righteousness, and love. For this the foundations of the world were laid, for this was sin suffered to enter, for this did the Son of the Eternal become incarnate, for this he lived, he suffered, he died, he rose again, for this are we all being passed through the sifting, testing, humbling, purifying, and sanctifying processes which make up the spiritual web and tissue of our earthly life. How weighty the argument to give ourselves heart and soul, all we are and all we have, to Christ, that in us and by us, the earliest, the dearest, the dominant design of our Heavenly Father may be fulfilled. Shall we, by our indifference, our worldliness, our selfishness, our ungodliness, be parties to the defeating of this so ancient, so infinitely benignant purpose of the Most High? Should any of us doubt that if in simplicity of

purpose we turn to Christ, and give ourselves to him, aught like repulse or failure shall await us? Will God refuse to do that in us and for us, the doing whereof to and for sinners such as we are, has been one of the very things that from eternity has lain the nearest to his heart?

We know but little of what awaits us after death. It would appear, however, from all that the Scriptures say, that the first time that ever with bodily eye we shall look upon our Lord and Saviour, shall be on that day when he shall come sitting on the throne of his glory, when before him we and all the nations of the earth shall be gathered. If so, the first words that we shall ever hear issuing audibly from his sacred lips shall be these—may Heaven in mercy grant it shall be as spoken of, and to us, that they shall fall upon our ear,—'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

XIV.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.[1]

Tuesday.

Is Christ's description of his last coming to judge the world, as given in the 25th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, a parable like the three that precede it? Whilst substantially true, that is, true as to the great fact that it announces and the great lesson it conveys, is it nevertheless to be taken as a story of the imagination, whose fancied incidents are but the drapery with which the hand of the great Artist clothes the fact and illustrates the lessons? We cannot believe so. The transition at the 31st verse from the style of the parable to that of plain and simple narrative is too marked to be overlooked or set aside. The Son of Man, who takes the place of the nobleman and the bridegroom, is a real not a figurative character, and all that is said in the 31st, 32d,

[1] Matt. xxv. 35-46.

33d, and 34th verses bears the marks of a faithful recital of what is actually to happen when the last day of the world's history arrives. But after the separation between the righteous and the wicked has been effected, is the Judge to enter upon such a formal statement of the grounds upon which the sentence in either case is based? and is there actually to be such a colloquy between him and those on his right hand and those on his left as is here recorded? We can scarcely believe this. It is difficult even to conceive how or by whom so great a multitude on either side could conduct such a colloquy with the Judge as is here recited. Nor is it necessary to believe that such verbal communications should pass to and fro in order to get at the true bearing and import of the passage. The Judge is represented as adducing a single test, the application of which to the righteous and the wicked brings out one great distinctive feature of the difference between them. It cannot surely be meant that the one point on which the sentence is made here to hinge constitutes the only one of which any cognizance will be taken, and on which the decisions of the day will rest; or,

admitting that there are others, that it stands out so conspicuously above and beyond them all, that it alone is regarded as furnishing the ground and reason of the verdicts given. We are inclined rather to believe that the single point of difference between those on the right hand and those on the left of the Judge is fixed upon as in itself supplying one of the most delicate, most discriminating, least fallible external proofs of the presence or the absence of that character of true discipleship to Jesus Christ, upon which the judgment proceeds. Outward acts or habits of the life, quoted and referred to by the Judge as the foundation of his judgments, could be so employed only in so far as they carried with them conclusive evidence as to the inner state of the mind and heart, only in so far as they were faithful and sufficient exponents of the inner springs and motives from which they flowed. But is there any kind or class of actions singularly and pre-eminently fitted, by their being always done by the one, and their being never done by the other, to mark off the true from the false, the real from the nominal followers of the Redeemer? I apprehend there is,—the very kind

and class of deeds which the Judge here lays his hand upon as characteristic of those standing on his right hand; for it is not any or every kind of feeding the hungry, or visiting the sick, or clothing the naked, that will meet the description here given. Those acts of compassion, love, and mercy which can alone truly and fully appropriate that description to themselves, must have these two peculiar qualities belonging to them—(1.) They must be done to the brethren of the Lord, so done as to justify the strong and striking language, 'I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.' (2.) They must be such that the doers of them were often if not always unconscious at the time that what they did was done unto Christ, else they could not honestly have answered as they did.

To whom, then, does Christ refer, when he speaks of the least of these his brethren, the rendering of any service to whom he reckons as so much kindness rendered to himself? For an

answer to this leading question I refer you to two other sayings of our Lord. The first occurs at the close of his address to the apostles on sending them forth, when, after laying down in the plainest and most emphatic terms the character and condition of the Christian discipleship, he went on to say, 'He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.'[1] Here the kind of giving which is in no wise to lose its reward is not simply the giving to one of Christ's little ones—which any one might do unawares, giving simply to the thirsty without regard to what they were,—but it is giving to them in the name of a disciple. The expression 'in the name of a disciple' is in itself ambiguous. It might either

[1] Matt. x. 40-42.

mean giving as a disciple, *i.e.*, as one who bore that name or character ought to give, or it might mean giving to another because the other bore and possessed the character and name. There is another saying of our Lord which clears away this ambiguity, recorded in the Gospel by St. Mark :[1] 'For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.' If this and the saying already quoted be accepted as containing the true explanation of the words spoken by the Judge, his citation must be restricted to acts of kindness done to Christ's true disciples, on the specific ground of their character as such. There must be then some striking peculiarity attaching to such acts entitling them to be employed under such circumstances for so great and grave a purpose. Whatever this peculiarity be, we have advanced so far as to perceive that it depends on the connexion between those to whom the kindnesses are shown and Christ. It must be therefore in the character of that motive which would lead us specially to sympathize

[1] Mark ix. 41.

with and to succour those standing in this connexion. In common life there are two kinds of connexion which one man may have with another, the existence of either of which might generate a claim upon our sympathy and help. There may be the connexion of relationship and there may be the connexion of resemblance. You recognise the claim springing from the first of these when you say that you cannot see the son of your best benefactor, or of your old and faithful friend, in want, unpitied and unrelieved. You recognise the claim springing from the other when you say that one, so like in character, in principle, in taste, in habit, to the friend whom you admire above all others, to whom you are most tenderly attached, has a hold involuntarily upon your heart. Between the two there is this difference, that if relationship be the only ground on which you act, the idea of that relationship must be distinctly before your mind; whereas, if it be similarity of character that supplies the impulse to benevolence, there may be at the time no felt or conscious reference to the person, likeness to whom may nevertheless form the secret spring of your con-

duct. As regards the union between Christ and all his true and faithful followers, the two species of connexion,—of relationship, and of resemblance,—are not only invariably to be found together, but you have no other sure means of knowing where the one tie, that of discipleship, exists, but by observing where the other, that of likeness, is manifested. The living heart-union with Christ which constitutes the central essential element of the Christian character, is no bare external bond, such as earthly relationships so often are. It never does, it never can, exist without more or less of the spirit of the Saviour himself being poured into the heart, more or less of a likeness to Christ being impressed upon the life. To discern the image of the Saviour so produced, in its dimmest and most broken, as well as in its fullest and brightest forms, and to feel the force of that attraction which this image exerts, the observer himself must have been fashioned into the same image, must have drunk in of the same spirit. But every one that loveth him that begat, loveth also all who are begotten of him; a secret sympathy, a bond of

true and deep and everlasting brotherhood binds all together who are one in Christ,—one in the participation of his Spirit; nor is it necessary to the force of that attraction being felt which draws them to one another, that a distinct or conscious regard be had either to Christ himself personally or to the common relationship in which they stand to him:

> 'Oft ere the common source be known
> The kindred drops will claim their own,
> And throbbing pulses silently
> Move heart to heart by sympathy.'

You may love, you may pity, you may help one of Christ's little ones without having Him before your thoughts, just as you may admire the splendour of a broken sunbeam without thinking of the orb of light; nay more, the further he and the relationship are for the moment out of sight, the more purely and entirely that the sympathy and aid spring spontaneously from seeing and admiring and loving in a suffering brother the meekness and the gentleness, the patience and the devout submission which Christian faith inspires, the clearer

and less doubtful the evidence that the same faith dwells in your own bosom, working there like results. The charity which flows unbidden from that inwrought kindredship of disposition by which all true followers of the Lamb are characterized, waiting not, when it sees a suffering brother, to make the inference that his belonging to Christ confers upon him a title to relief, —springs not from any anticipation of reward. It flows at once out of that love to Christ, supreme, predominant, which has taken possession of the heart. And hence the explanation of the answer which the righteous are represented as making to the declaration of the Judge,—the simple, natural utterance of humility and surprise: 'Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came to thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.'

Should any one, then, under the impression

that the first question to which in the great judgment he would have to give reply, would be this, 'Did you ever relieve any of Christ's brethren because of their being such?' feeling unfurnished and anxious to provide himself with a sufficient and satisfactory answer, go forth immediately and seek out some destitute disciples and minister to their wants, would such a ministry of benevolence as that suit the requirements of the Judge? Assuredly not. You might to any extent feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, or visit the sick; those whom you thus clothed and fed and visited might be brethren of the Lord; nay, you might select them as the objects of your charity on that very account, and yet after all your charity might be but selfishness in disguise, utterly wanting that element so delicately and beautifully brought out in the answer of the righteous, of being the unconscious emanation of a true love and a true likeness to Jesus Christ. No charity of mere natural instinct, no charity of outward show or artificial fabric, no charity but that which is the genuine, spontaneous, untainted product of a profound personal attachment to the Saviour, will meet the

requirements of the Judge. And the more you study the deeds to which he points, and which are here described, the more will you be convinced that a more truthful and delicate test of the presence and power of such an attachment could not have been selected than that which the performance of such deeds supplies.

Let us turn now for a moment to the sentence passed upon those standing on the left hand of the Judge: 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' How striking the antithesis between this and the sentence passed upon the righteous! The 'Come' of the one has its counterpart in the 'Depart' of the other; 'ye blessed,' its counterpart in 'ye cursed.' But it is not, 'ye cursed of my Father.' The blessing had come from him. The Son as Judge attributes it to the Father. But the curse comes from another source. The Judge will not connect his Father's name with it. The wicked have drawn down the curse upon their own heads; its fountainhead is elsewhere than in the bosom of eternal love. The kingdom, upon the inheritance of which the righteous are called

to enter, is not spoken of as an everlasting kingdom. There was no need of so describing it; by its very nature it is a kingdom that cannot be shaken, can never be removed. But the fire is called an everlasting fire, to remind us that so long as ever in the bosom of the sinful the fuel for that flame exists, it must burn on, the ever sinning bringing the ever suffering with it in its train. But here again there is a variation of the phrase. In the one case it is a kingdom prepared for the righteous themselves from the foundation of the world; in the other it is a fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Can we believe this variation to be unintentional and insignificant? Shall we not gladly accept the truth that lies concealed in it, that God delighteth in mercy, and that judgment is his strange work?

Then follows the colloquy between the Judge and the condemned, by far the most impressive thing in which, to our eye, being this, that the Judge does not in their case bring forward an opposite and contrasted kind or class of actions to confront with those attributed to the righteous, in order to indicate the presence

within of an opposite character, the operation in them of an opposite class of motives. Against the cited deeds of mercy he does not set up as many deeds of selfishness, or unkindness, or cruelty. He puts the whole stress of the condemnatory sentence simply and alone upon the non-performance of the service of love to his brethren, and through them to himself. Had it been a merely moral reckoning with mankind that was intended to be represented here, then surely so much positive evidence on the one side would have been met with so much positive evidence on the other. Had it been meant that all men were to be divided into two classes, and acquitted or condemned according to their respective kindliness or charitableness of disposition and conduct, with whatever accuracy the dividing line be carried throughout the entire mass of mankind, such infinite variety of shades of character and modes of conduct are there that those nearest to the line on one side would approach so closely to those nearest to it on the other, that it would be very difficult to make out the equity of an adjustment which would raise

the one to heaven and consign the other to hell. It is however upon no such principle that the separation is represented here as being conducted. The great, the primary requirement, the presence or the absence of which fixes the position of each class on the right hand or upon the left of the Judge, is love to Christ, likeness unto him, as tested and exhibited in deeds of kindness done unto his poor afflicted suffering children. Apart from such love, such likeness to the Lord himself, you cannot have the special affection to his brethren. That special affection cannot subsist without running out into countless acts of compassion, of needful and generous help. As to Christ himself, then, it is not our knowledge, nor our faith, that is to furnish the ground of our being numbered with those who are to stand on the right hand of the Judge. Infinite may be the variety, both in kind and in degree, of the acquaintance with the Saviour's character, the confidence in the Saviour's work. In the multitude that no man can number there be those who saw the day of Christ as afar off, who had but dim perceptions of the personal character

and high office executed by the great Redeemer of mankind. In one thing they shall agree: in having hearts linked by the tie of a supreme affection to him, in having lives pictured over with those many acts of loving tenderness and tender mercy here so simply and so beautifully portrayed. As to our fellow-men, again, it is not our honesty, our justice, our generosity, our fidelity, our natural benevolence which is to place us on the right hand of the Judge. It is how we have felt, it is how we have acted, towards the afflicted brethren of Jesus. A narrow contracted circle this may appear, yet one round which all the earthly virtues will be found to congregate, finding there the bond that binds them all together as the fruits of the Spirit, and wraps them all in harmonious and beautiful assemblage round the cross of the Crucified. He may be a kind man who is not honest, an honest man who is not meek, a meek man who is not pure, but, take him who feeds the hungry, who clothes the naked, who visits the sick, because of the spirit of Jesus implanted in his own soul, and because of the image of the Saviour seen on them he ministers to- -this man's deeds of

mercy will not be limited to that one circle; ready to show special kindness to those that are of the household of the faith, he will be ready to do good unto all men as God gives him the opportunity. Be not then over-careful, ye who are members of this household, to distinguish among the poor and the afflicted who are daily appealing to your benevolence, who do and who do not belong to Christ. If so, you may be putting it out of your power to join in the language put into the lips of the righteous, 'Lord, when saw we thee an hungered?' Cultivate that large diffusiveness of pity and of help, that would, if it could, feed all the hungry, and give drink to all the thirsty, leave none who wanted unvisited and unrelieved. 'Be not forgetful,' said the apostle, 'to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.' Angel footsteps no longer tread on earth, angels come not now to our tent-doors. For angels clothed in human forms we may no longer, as the patriarchs did, spread the table and lay out the food. But a greater than angels walks among us, in suffering, in disguise. Christ himself is here,—here in some

hungry one to be fed, some imprisoned one to be visited, some afflicted one to be comforted. Be not forgetful to let your sympathy and help range over the whole field of suffering humanity; here and there you may be succouring your Saviour unawares; you may be pleasing him who identifies himself with all his needy suffering children, and who will be ready at last to say, 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.'

XV.

THE WASHING OF THE DISCIPLES' FEET.[1]

Thursday.

JESUS sat down upon the Mount of Olives, over against the Temple; and as the shadows of evening deepened in the valley of Kedron, and crept up its sides, he addressed to his wondering disciples the parables and prophecies preserved in the 24th and 25th chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel. It was after he had finished all these sayings, either before he rose from his seat on the hill-side, or on his way out afterwards to the village, that he said to his disciples, 'Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified.' He had previously in his discourse been dealing with a broad and distant future, been sketching the world's history, describing its

[1] Matt. xxvi. 1-5, 14-19; Mark xiv. 1, 2, 11-17; Luke xxii. 1-30; John xiii. 1-20.

close,—giving no dates, leaving much as to the sequence of events shadowy and undefined. Now he turns to a nearer future, to an event that was to happen to himself; and in terms free of all indistinctness and ambiguity he announces that the day after the next he would be betrayed, and afterwards crucified.

It may have been about the very time that Christ himself was speaking thus of his impending betrayal and crucifixion, that a secret session of the Sanhedrim was assembling, not in its usual Hall of meeting, which formed part of the Temple buildings, but in the house of Caiaphas, which tradition has located on the Hill of Evil Counsel, the height rising on the other side of the city from the Mount of Olives, across the valley of Hinnom. To this house of Caiaphas, wherever it was situated, the chief priests, and scribes, and elders of the people now resorted to hold their secret conclave. They met in chafed and angry mood. For three consecutive days Jesus had been denouncing and defying them, in the most open manner, in the most public places. They had tried all their art to weaken his reputation, to put

him wrong with the people or with their rulers, to extort from him some saying that might betray ignorance or involve blasphemy or treason. They had been more than defeated; their own weapons had been turned against themselves; the bitterest humiliation had been inflicted on them. There was but one remedy. They must meet this man in the Temple courts no more. Never again must they allow themselves to be dragged into personal collision with him. There was but one seal for lips like his—the seal of death, and the sooner it were imposed the better. They had no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that he must die. But as old and practised politicians, who knew the people well, they hesitated as to the time and manner of taking and killing him. An open arrest at this particular time, when there were in and around Jerusalem such crowds of ignorant country-people, among them such numbers of those fiery-spirited Galileans, over whom Jesus had acquired so great an apparent mastery, would be perilous in the last degree. And so, curbing their wrath, they think it better to bide a while, and they said,

'Not at the feast time, lest there be an uproar among the people.' Whatever pain the self-restraint may have cost them was more than overcome by the joy they felt when Judas came and said, 'What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?' A hopeful sign this in their eyes: one of this man's bosom friends turning against him, having some good ground, no doubt, they think, to hate him, as he evidently does. He can do for them the very thing they want: put it in their power to seize Jesus in one of his secret haunts, come upon him 'in the absence of the multitude.' And he is quite willing, obviously, to meet their wishes. Nor is he hard to bargain with. They offer him thirty silver shekels, the fixed price in the old law of the life of a servant, somewhere between three and four pounds of our money. He accepts the offer, and it is agreed between them that this sum shall be given him on his delivery of Jesus into their hands. Neither he nor they at first imagine that this would be done so speedily—even during the approaching feast.

A baser piece of treachery, a fouler compact,

there has never been. Judas may not have been an utterly false man from the very beginning of his attachment to Christ's person; it may not have been pure and simple selfishness and greed that tempted him to join the ranks of Christ's disciples. Once, however, admitted, to his own great surprise perhaps, among the twelve, and intrusted with the care of the small common fund which they possessed, the low base spirit that was in him led him into all kinds of selfish and covetous speculations and anticipations. As our Lord's career ran on, it became more and more apparent that little room for indulging these would be given. Disappointment grew into discontent. In the loving, pure, unearthly, unselfish, good and holy Jesus, there was nothing to attract, there was much to repel. The closer the contact the more that repellent power was felt. Already, toward the close of the second year of his attachment to Christ's person, he had said or done something to draw from the reticent lips of his Master the declaration, 'Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?'[1] Still later, his Master's whole bearing, speech, and

[1] John vi. 70.

conduct, his retiring from the crowd, his courting solitude, the deep shades of sadness on his countenance, his beginning to tell his disciples privately, but plainly, that he was about to be taken from them, that a shameful and cruel death was about to be inflicted on him, all this, little as Judas, in common with the rest, may have understood or realized the actual issue that was impending, ran utterly counter to all his plans and hopes. Upon disappointment, discontent, alienation, and disgust may have supervened, and in so ill a mood may Judas then have been, that the rebuke a few days before at Bethany, when he had interposed his remark about the box of precious ointment, had galled him to the uttermost, and whetted his spirit even to the keen edge of malice and revenge. That all this may have been so does not interfere with the belief that in the final stages of his treachery, other motives besides those of personal malice and pure greed may have entered into his heart and taken their share in prompting to the last black deed that has stamped his name with infamy.

It would not appear that in the compact as at

first made between Judas and the Sanhedrim, there was any stipulation as to time. His offer would facilitate a secret and safe arrest of Jesus, but it may not have at once and entirely allayed their fears as to attempting this arrest during the feast. The conditions settled as to the thing to be done, and the bribe to be paid for the doing of it, they part, leaving it to Judas to find his own time and opportunity.

And now in the current of a narrative, which, ever since our Lord's arrival in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, has been getting quicker and more disturbed, there is a stop, a stillness. The troubled waters sink for a season out of sight, to rise again darker and more vexed than ever. On the Tuesday evening Jesus retired to Bethany, and we see nothing, know nothing of him for the next day and a half. The intervening Wednesday would, no doubt, be given to quiet and repose. There are hollows in our own Arthur Seat not as far from Edinburgh as Bethany was from Jerusalem, in which one feels as far away from the noise and bustle of city life as if in the heart of the Highlands. Such was the

hollow in which the favourite village lay, and there, in occupations unknown to us, this one peaceful day was spent, and there at night he had where to lay his head for his last sleep before his death—the night and day recruiting him in body and in spirit for Gethsemane and the Cross.

On the Thursday afternoon he once more bent his steps towards the holy city. He was to celebrate that evening the Passover with his disciples. Much in the way of preparation had to be done,—the selection of a suitable apartment, the killing of the lamb, the providing of the bread, the wine, and the salad of bitter herbs. Nothing as yet had been arranged, and there was now but little time to spare. The disciples come to him saying, 'Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover?' Our Lord does not send them all at random to do the best they could; he singles out Peter and John. Though often singularly and closely associated afterwards, this, I believe, was the only time that Christ separated them from all the rest, and gave them a conjunct task to perform. In sending them before the others, he could easily and

at once have indicated where the room was in which they were to meet in the evening. Instead of this he gives them a sign, the following of which was to conduct them to it. This way of ordering it, whatever was its real purpose, served effectually to conceal from the others the locality of the guest-chamber, and may have been meant to keep the traitor in the meantime in ignorance of a fact, his earlier knowledge of which, communicated to the chief priests, might have precipitated the catastrophe, and cut off Gethsemane from our Saviour's passion.

'Go into the city, and when you enter there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?' Upon these Passover occasions the inhabitants of the metropolis opened their houses freely to strangers coming up from the country; but was there no danger, if it were known that this accommodation was required for him whose life the authorities were seeking, that it might be denied? The sin-

gular message which Peter and John were to deliver would reveal the very thing which, left to their own discretion, they might have wished to hide, for could two men in Galilean garb and with Galilean accent speak of the Master and his disciples, and it not be known of whom they spoke? Coming from such a quarter, carrying with it such a tone of authority, being, in fact, a command rather than a request, might not the goodman of the house be offended and refuse? The instructions, however, are precise, and Peter and John follow them. All happens as Christ had indicated. They go into the city, they meet the man with the pitcher, they follow him, they deliver the message, and whether it was that the man himself was a disciple of Jesus, or that he was otherwise influenced, not only is there a ready and cordial compliance on his part, but, when Peter and John are shown into the apartment, they find it, as was not always the case, already furnished and prepared. It was a momentous meeting which on this last night of our Redeemer's life was to take place in this room, one never to be forgotten, to be had in

memory by generation after generation, through all the after history of the Church; and everything about it, even to the indicating of the place and the providing of the needful furniture, was matter of divine foresight and care.

The accounts of the different Evangelists are so broken and confused that it is impossible to give anything like a regular connected narrative of what happened that night within the guest-chamber. At an early stage a strife broke out among the apostles as to which of them should be accounted the greatest. This may have happened after the Passover celebration had commenced. The first thing done, when the company had assembled and sat down, was to pass round a cup of wine, the first of the four that were circulated in the course of the feast. If it was in doing so that they were uttered, then our Lord's first words after sitting down were those: 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not eat any more thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this and divide it among

yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.'[1] Never before had they sat down in such a formal manner with their Master at their head. The circumstance of taking their places around this board suggests to their narrow minds thoughts of the places and the dignities that, as they fancied, were afterwards to be theirs; and when, almost as soon as he had sat down, Jesus began to speak of the kingdom as if he was just about to enter on it, the strife as to which of them should be greatest in that kingdom arose.

But this strife has been attributed to another origin, one which links it in a manner so natural to the washing of the disciples' feet as to predispose us to adopt it. The master of the house had relinquished for the strangers the best apartment of his dwelling, and furnished it as well as he could. There was one duty of the host, however, that he failed to discharge. He did not personally receive the guests, nor preside at the washing of the feet, which always preceded the beginning

[1] Luke xxii. 15-18.

of a feast. He and his family and his domestics were all themselves elsewhere engaged in the keeping of the Passover. He saw that in the room the necessary apparatus for the washing, the basin and the water and the towel, were all provided, but he left it to the guests themselves to see that it was done. But which of the twelve will do it for the others? It is the office of the servant, the slave; which of them will acknowledge that he stands in any such relationship to the rest? Besides the settlement of their respective places around the table, here was another root of bitterness springing up to trouble, raising the question of precedency among them.

Spring up how it might, we have the fact that around the first communion-table among the apostles, in presence of their Master, in the critical and solemn position in which he and they stood, there was actually a quarrel about their individual rights and privileges; a petty ambition, the love of place and power, finding its way into the hearts of those most honoured of the Lord, entering to defile the most sacred season and solemnity. There is some excuse for the twelve

untaught Galilean fishermen, with all their vulgar conceptions at this time of what was coming when their Master's kingdom should be instituted. But what shall we say of those who have had the full light of the after revelations given, and who, in front of our Lord's most solemn declaration that his kingdom is not of this world, that the kind of authority and lordship that kings and princes assume and exercise should not have place within his Church, under the garb of a glowing zeal, harbour as strong a love of place and power, as much vanity and pride, as much irritation of temper, as much severity and uncharitableness, as is ever to be seen in the world of common life? Alas for the strife of the first communion-table! Alas for the strifes and debates of almost every ecclesiastical body which since the days of Jesus Christ has been embodied in his name. You might have thought that in those churches where the distinctions were the fewest and of the least value, where there was least of that kind of food upon which the pride and vanity and ambition of our nature feed, there would have been proportionally less of their presence and power. The

fact, I think, rather lies the other way, for a reason not difficult to divine.

None of the twelve would do the part of the minister or the servant to the others; and so, grumbling among themselves, they sit down with unwashed feet. Jesus rises from the table, lays aside his upper garment, pours water into the basin, takes the towel, girds himself with it, and begins himself to do what none of them would undertake. One of the first before whose feet the Saviour stooped may have been Judas. We shall see presently, that he had thrust himself into a seat very near to, if not the next to that of Christ. He allows his feet to be washed, not without a certain strange feeling in heart, but without word spoken or remonstrance made. But when Jesus approaches Peter, the impetuous apostle cannot remain silent. 'Lord,' he says, lost in wonder, full of reverence, profoundly sensible of the great gulf that separated himself and all the rest from Jesus,—'Lord, dost thou wash my feet?' He gets the calm reply, 'What I do thou knowest not now;'—'thou hast not yet discerned—though it needed no quick eye to see

it—the purpose of my act; but thou shalt know hereafter, shalt know presently.' But the impatient apostle will not submit and wait. Strong in his sense of the unseemliness, the unsuitableness of the act, fancying that the very love and reverence he bore to Jesus forbade him to permit it, he declares, 'Thou shalt never wash my feet.' 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me,' is Christ's reply,—a single slender beam of light upon the darkness, enough to point to some higher spiritual meaning of the act, not enough to reveal the whole significance of the transaction to Peter's mind, but quite enough to turn at once into quite an opposite channel the current of his feelings. 'No part with thee if thou wash me not!—then, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.' Taking up once more his act in its symbolic character, as representative of the spiritual washing by regeneration, Jesus saith to him, 'He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.' For even as he who in the ordinary roadway cleanses himself from outward defilement is clean every whit, and needs no after washing save

that of the feet—for go where he may upon the dusty roads, every hour, and at all times, the feet are being soiled, and need renewed, repeated washings,—so is it true of him who hath gone down into the great laver, and washed all sins away in the blood of the atonement, that he is clean every whit, has all his sins forgiven, all the guilt of them removed, and needs no after washing, saving that which consisteth in the removal of the daily stains that are ever afresh, by our converse with this world, being contracted. 'And ye are clean,' added Jesus, 'but not all.' The words, but faintly understood, yet so calmly and authoritatively uttered, effect their immediate object. Peter silently submits; the work goes on; the circle is completed. The feet of all are washed, no one after Peter venturing to resist or remonstrate.

The feet-washing in the guest-chamber by our Lord himself we are inclined to regard as the greatest instance of his humiliation as a man in the common intercourse of life, in the discharge of its ordinary duties. He was at pains himself to guard it against misinterpretation: 'So, after he

had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.' It was his being so infinitely their superior that lent its grace and full significance to the act. And this superiority, so far from cloaking, or with false humility pretending to disown, he asserts. This is what makes the whole ministry of our Lord on earth so utterly unlike that of any other man who has ever trodden it. No one ever made pretensions so high; no one ever executed offices more humble. No one ever claimed to stand so far above the ordinary level of our humanity; speaking of himself as the light of the world, having rest and peace and life for all at his disposal, to dispense as truly royal gifts to all who owned him as their spiritual King. No one ever made himself more thoroughly one with every human being whom he met, or was so ready with all the services that in his need one man may claim from his brother.

'If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's

feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you.' With that greatest of all examples before us, what act, what office of human kindness naturally laid upon us should we ever count too low, too mean,—should we shrink from, because of any idea that it would be a humiliating of ourselves before our fellow-men to undertake it? It is indeed an utter mistaking of this example to suppose that it calls us to a repetition of the very act of Christ. Only if there be feet needing to be washed, which the custom of the time and country requires to be so, while there is no one else upon whom the duty properly devolves, only then does the example of Jesus call to a literal imitation of what he did. His own act stands before us not as a model act to be exactly copied, but as an act representative to us of the whole circle of kindly offices that we are called upon to render to one another, and as illustrative of the humble self-denying spirit in which all these offices should be discharged. You are all aware that, on each returning Maundy Thursday, the day before Easter, the Pope washes the feet of twelve poor men. A better comment

has never been made upon the act than the one made long ago by Bengel. 'In our day,' he says, 'popes and princes imitate the feet-washing to the letter, but a greater subject for admiration would be, for instance, a Pope in unaffected humility washing the feet of one king (his own equal in rank, and so the exact analogue to the disciples' mutual washing of each other as brethren), than the feet of twelve paupers.' So true were the Saviour's words that went to indicate the difficulty which lay in a faithful following of the example that he had just been setting,—'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.' So easy is it to violate the spirit by sticking to the letter of a precept; so easy for pride to take the form of humility.

XVI.

THE EXPOSURE OF JUDAS.[1]

Thursday.

THE four Evangelists agree in stating that it was upon a Sunday, the day after the Jewish Sabbath, that our Lord rose from the grave, and that it was on the day preceding this Sabbath that he was crucified. They all assign the same events to the same days of the week: the last supper to Thursday evening, the crucifixion to Friday, the lying in the tomb to Saturday, the resurrection to Sunday. But there is a marked discrepancy in the accounts of the three earlier Evangelists as compared with that of St. John, as to the relation of these days of the week to the Jewish days of the month and of the feast.

[1] Matt. xxvi. 21-25; Mark xiv. 18-21; Luke xxii. 21-23; John xiii. 21-35.

If we had only the narratives of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke before us, we must at once have concluded that our Lord partook of the Passover supper at the same time with the Jews. On the other hand, if we had only the narrative of St. John before us, we should as naturally have concluded that it was upon the evening after the crucifixion, that the Paschal supper was observed generally by the Jews, and that Jesus must have antedated his observance of it, partaking of it a day before the usual one, on the evening of the 13th day of the month Nisan. The removal of this discrepancy is one of the most difficult problems with which harmonists of the Gospels have had to deal, nor is there any single question touching the chronology of our Saviour's life upon which more labour and learning have been bestowed. The success has not been equal to the pains bestowed. The matter still remains in doubt. No doubt whatever exists as to the fact, that, whether he anticipated the ordinary time or not, it was that he might observe the Jewish Passover with his disciples, that our Lord, on the night of his betrayal,

sat down with his twelve apostles in the guest-chamber at Jerusalem.

In the Paschal supper, as then observed (and we cannot well imagine that our Lord would deviate to any great degree from the customary manner of its observance), four, and on some occasions five, cups of wine were circulated among the guests, marking different stages of the feast. When the company, which ordinarily was not less than ten, nor more than twenty,[1] had assembled and ranged themselves round the tables, the first cup of wine was filled, and the head of the family (for we are to look upon this ordinance as essentially a family gathering) pronounced a blessing on the feast and on the cup, using the expression, 'Praise be to thee, O Lord our God, the King of the world, who hast created the fruit of the vine.' After the blessing, the cup was passed round, and the hands were washed. The bitter herbs dipped in vinegar were then placed upon the table, and a portion of them eaten in remembrance of the sorrows of the Egyptian

[1] It might be one hundred, if each could have a piece of the lamb as large as an olive.

bondage. After this the other Paschal dishes were brought in: the charoseth or sop, a liquid compounded of various fruits and mingled with wine or vinegar, into which pieces of bread were dipped; the cake of unleavened bread; and finally the roasted lamb placed before the head of the company. Then followed the questions and explanations put and given in accordance with the instructions of Moses: 'And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.'[1] They sang then together the first part of the Hallel or song of praise, embracing the 113th and 114th Psalms, and the second cup of wine was drunk. Then began the the feast proper: the householder, taking two small loaves, breaking one of them in two, laying the pieces upon the whole loaf, wrapping the whole in bitter herbs, dipping it in the sop, and eating it, with the words, 'This is the bread of

[1] Exodus xii. 26, 27.

affliction which our fathers ate in Egypt.' Next came the blessing upon each kind of food as it was partaken of, the Paschal lamb being eaten last, and the third cup, called the cup of blessing, was drunk. The remainder of the Hallel, the Psalms from the 115th to the 118th, were sung or chanted, with which the celebration ordinarily concluded. Occasionally a fifth cup was added, and what was called the Great Hallel (Psalms cxx.-cxxxvii.) was repeated.

It was after the strife and the feet-washing, and coincident with the circulation of the first of these Passover cups, that our Lord used the words recorded in the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th verses of the 22d chapter of St. Luke: 'And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.' Clear before the Saviour's eye were all the scenes of the impending midnight hour in the garden, the next forenoon in the judgment-hall, the afternoon upon the cross. He stood touching the very edge of these great sufferings. The baptism that he had to be baptized with was now at hand—and how was he straitened till it was accomplished!

—a few quiet hours lay between him and his entrance into the cloud. With a desire more earnest and vehement than on any other occasion, he wished to spend those hours with his apostles,—to take his last leave of them,—to give his farewell instructions to them. He had never before partaken of the Passover with them. He desired to do it this once. He knew that it could never be repeated. He knew that this was virtually the last Jewish Passover, that with the offering up of himself in the great sacrifice of the following day that long line of Passover celebrations that had run now through fifteen hundred years, down from the night in Egypt when the first-born were slain, was to be brought to its close. He knew that all which this rite prefigured was then to be fulfilled, and that that fulfilment was to issue in the erection of a spiritual kingdom, in which other kind of tables were to be spread, and other kind of wine to be drunk. 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took

the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come.' Emphatic here the double repetition of the words, 'for I say unto you,'—calling special attention to the words that followed. Responding to this call, we fix our thoughts upon these words; but beyond the intimation they contain of that being our Lord's last Passover, and of his speedy entering into an estate altogether higher, yet in some respects alike, they remain almost as mysterious to us as they must have been to those who heard them for the first time at the supper-table.

In washing the disciples' feet, Jesus had said, 'Ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.'[1] So early, from the very first, did the thought of Judas and his meditated deed press upon the Saviour's spirit. When the washing of the feet was over, and Jesus sat down, and the repast began, they all noticed that there was a cloud upon their Master's countenance, and the

[1] John xiii. 10, 11.

disciple who, sitting next to him, could best read the expression of his face, saw that he 'was troubled in spirit.' What was vexing him? what was marring the joy of such a meeting? They are not left long in doubt as to the cause. Christ breaks the silence into which, in the sadness of his spirit, he had fallen; he speaks in tone and manner quite different from that of his ordinary colloquial address. And he 'testified and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you which eateth with me shall betray me!' Betray him! how? for what? to what? Betray such a Master at such a time! Bad enough for any common disciple to use the means and opportunities that acquaintance gave to effect his ruin; but for one of them, his own familiar friends, whom he has drawn so closely round his person, upon whom he had lavished such affection,—for one of those admitted to this most sacred of meals, the holiest seal of the nearest earthly bond; for one of the twelve to betray him! No wonder, as the thought of all the guilt which such an act involved sprung up within their breasts, that they should be, as they were, 'exceeding sorrow-

ful;' that they should look 'one on another, doubting of whom he spake,'—fixing searching looks on all round, to see whether any countenance showed the confusion of felt guilt, that, after inquiring among themselves which of them it was that 'should do this thing,' they should begin, 'every one of them, to say unto him, one by one, Is it I? and another, Is it I?' You like the men who met such an announcement in such a way. You like them for the burning sense of shame they show at the very thought of there being one among them capable of such a deed. You like them for the strong desire that each man shows to clear himself from the charge. You like them for the prompt appeal that each man makes to Jesus. Above all, you like them that there is none so bold and over-confident, not even Peter, as at once to think and say of himself that there was no possibility it could be he, but that all, not without some secret wonder and self-distrust, put in turn the question, 'Lord, is it I?' All but one! He did not at first dare to put this question to his Master. In the confusion, his having omitted to do so would not be noticed.

He had returned look for look, as they at first scanned each other; no face calmer or less confused; no one suspecting Judas.

To the many questions coming so eagerly from all sides and ends of the table, Jesus made the general reply: 'He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.' Had there been but one vessel containing the Paschal sauce into which all dipped, this would have been nothing more than a repetition of the first announcement that it was one of them now eating with him at the same table that should betray him. But if, as we have every reason to believe, there were more than one dish upon the table, this second saying of our Lord would limit the betrayal to that smaller circle of which he was himself the centre,—the three or four all of whom dipped into the same vessel. Within that circle was Judas, who, when he heard the terrible words that followed, 'The Son of Man goeth as it is written of him, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born,' whether from the circle having been drawn so

much the narrower taking him in among the few one of whom must be the man, or from the look of his Master being fixed on him, the spell of which he could not resist, or from the very burden and terror of a denunciation which sent a thrill through every heart, could no longer remain silent, but said to Jesus, as the others had done before: 'Master, is it I? Jesus said unto him: 'Thou hast said;' that is, 'Yes, thou art the man.'

We have the express testimony of the fourth Evangelist that no man at the table but himself knew for what purpose Judas at last went out, that none of them at this time suspected him as the betrayer. No man at the table then could have heard that answer of our Lord; a thing that we can scarcely imagine how it could be, but by supposing that Judas lay upon the seat immediately next to Jesus on the one side, as John lay upon the one nearest to him on the other. Assuming this, Jesus might easily have spoken to one so near in such an under tone, that none could overhear.

Let us imagine now, that close to Judas, on the

same side, or one or two off from John, upon the other side, Peter was sitting, and the last incident in the strange story becomes intelligible. None have heard our Saviour's specific designation of the traitor to himself. The terrible malediction, however, pronounced upon him has whetted their curiosity to know who he is. Peter sees that John is the most likely one to find it out. If the Master will tell it to any one, it will be to him, he couching so close to Jesus that he has only to throw back his head for it to rest upon his Master's bosom. Into his ear, therefore, any secret may be easily and safely whispered. As Peter is so placed that he cannot well do it otherwise without his object revealing itself, by signs rather than by words he tells John to ask. John does so, and gets an answer that was specific and unambiguous; one, however, that no one at table but himself could have had any knowledge of. 'He it is,' said Jesus, 'to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.' Two men of the twelve now knew to whom the Lord referred,—Judas, on the one side, to whom Jesus had

directly said, 'Thou art the man,' and John, now, on the other, to whom the sign was as explicit as any words could be, a sign, however, only to John himself, the others not having heard the words that gave the act its meaning. The giving of the sop to him decided the course of the betrayer. 'That thou doest,' said Jesus to him, 'do quickly.' He rose and went out immediately; and it was night. And into that night he went carrying a blacker night within his own dark breast. And now, how are we to interpret this striking passage in the history of our Lord?

1. This exposure and denunciation of the traitor may have been one of the needful steps in the accomplishment of the divine designs. Judas had already made a compact with the chief priests to deliver Jesus into their hands. But of the time and manner of that deliverance nothing had been said. As to these, nothing had been resolved on. We may well believe that Judas entered the guest-chamber without any premeditated purpose of executing his design that night. The discovery, however, that his Master already knew all that he had done, all that he meant to do, the judg-

ment passed, the terrible woe denounced on him, instead of checking him in his career, served but to spur him on, and form within him, and fix the purpose to go and do that very night the thing he had engaged to do. Operating in this way, what was said and done by Jesus may have contributed to the accomplishment within the appointed time of the predetermined counsel and purpose of the Most High.

2. We have Christ's own authority for saying that one of his reasons for acting as he did toward Judas was to afford to the other apostles an evidence of his Messiahship. 'I speak not of you all,' he had said; 'I know whom I have chosen: but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.' Had nothing been said beforehand by Jesus, had everything ran the course it did, their Master remaining apparently in profound ignorance of how his arrest in the garden was to be brought about, then to the apostles' eyes this mystery would have hung

around the whole procedure, that Jesus had been deceived, had suffered a traitor to enter unknown and undetected into the innermost circle of his friends, had fallen by an unexpected blow from the hand of one fancied to be friendly. As it was, what a proof had the apostles set before their eyes, that Jesus knew what was in man, and needed not that any one should tell him what was in man. None of them had distrusted Judas. He could have given no patent proof of his false-heartedness. He had kept up the appearance of true friendship to the last, so as to deceive every other eye. Yet when all is over, and they recall what their Master had said a year before his death, that one of them was a devil, and remember especially the sayings of the guest-chamber, how vividly would the conviction come home to the minds of the apostles, that they had to do with one from whom no secrets were hidden, before whose all-seeing eye every heart lay naked and bare!

3. Let us see here an exhibition of the humanity of Jesus, his being truly one of us, with all the common sensibility of our nature, moral and

emotional. There is nothing that the human heart so shrinks from and shudders at as treachery in a friend; the wearing of a mask, the acceptance of all the tokens and pledges of affection, the profession of admiration, attachment, love, yet deep within coldness, sullenness, selfishness, a waiting for and seeking for opportunity to make gain of the cultivated friendship, and a readiness, when the time comes, to sacrifice the friend on the altar of pride, or covetousness, or ambition. And if Jesus resented the hypocrisy and treachery of Judas, if his spirit recoiled from near contact with the traitor, if when these last hours had come which he wished to spend alone with those he had loved so well and was loving now, if that could be, better than ever the nearer the hour of his departure came,—he felt as if that guest-chamber were defiled by such a presence as that of Judas, and felt burdened and restrained till he was gone, what is this but saying that there beat in him the same heart that beats in all of us, when that heart is right within? One object of the Saviour in so soon introducing the topic of his betrayal may have been to get rid of

a presence felt to be incongruous, felt to be a restraint. He had much to say that was for the ear of friendship alone. He had to open up his heart in a way that no one would seek to do before the cold and the unsympathizing, much less before the alienated and the hostile. It may have been with the feeling that the sooner he was gone the better, that Jesus said to Judas, 'What thou doest, do quickly.' One thing at least is evident, that it was with a burst of elation and joy, as one escaping from under a dull and heavy pressure that crushed the spirit into sadness, that Jesus spoke to the others instantly on Judas being gone. 'Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him. Little children, yet a little while I am with you,' and so on throughout all the remainder of the feast he speaks and acts with a free unburdened heart.

4. There is more than the humanity here; there is the divinity of our Lord. He assumes and exercises the office of the Judge. He is a God to

Judas. He takes this man into his hands, and deals with him as none but God had a right to do. I speak not of that knowledge which laid bare to him all that he had in his heart to do, but of his dooming him as he did; his pronouncing over him the most terrible sentence that was ever pronounced over a human being on this side eternity: 'Woe to that man; it had been good for that man if he had not been born!' That there was tenderness and pity, infinite pity and infinite tenderness in the heart of Jesus for Judas, who can doubt? That in dealing with him as he did in the guest-chamber, he was giving him another and last opportunity of repentance I do most thoroughly believe. What way could you take more fitted to turn any man from a crime that you knew he meditated, than the telling him beforehand that you knew all that he intended and had planned to do, and by denouncing the crime contemplated in the strongest terms you could employ? That a purpose of mercy lay embedded in our Lord's treatment of Judas is not disproved by the fact, that instead of working anything like repentance, it stirred up the malicious

feelings to an intenser activity. That fact, like the thousand others of like kind that are daily, hourly happening in God's moral government of our race, only shows that the very goodness and grace of the Most High, the wisdom, purity, and holiness of his law, are too often turned by the perverse spirit that is in us into incitements to a bolder and more determined resistance to his authority. The case of Judas, in this stage of it, is but another instance of what is a very common experience, that if a man have once fairly committed himself to a certain course, have resolved to brave all its perils in order to realize its fancied gains, he becomes so self-blinded, so impetuous, so impatient of all check or hindrance, that anything whatever thrown in his way, however fitted in itself to warn and check, becomes but as a goad in the side of a fiery steed, driving him the more fiercely on his career. But is it over one whom mercy and love have followed to the farthest limits, and have been obliged at last to let go, that the fearful sentence is pronounced: 'Woe to that man; it had been better for him that he had never been born!' Does he who says that

know it to be true? He can know it only by his being one with God. Has he who pronounces this doom a title to do so? He can have it only by challenging to himself the prerogatives of the Supreme Judge of all mankind.

5. Let us look on with wonder and awe as there is opened here to our view in one of its depths, the great mystery of this world and of God's wise and holy government of it. 'It had been better for that man that he had never been,'—but why then was he born? A great crime is made to minister to the greatest act and instance of the divine love, yet the criminal is stripped of no part of his guilt. 'The Son of Man goeth as it is written;' that writing is but the expression of the divine will; that will is sovereign, just, and good; yet woe to the man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!—human freedom, human agency, human guilt taken up into that vast and complicated machinery by which the counsels of the Most High God are carried out. 'O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' 'Thou wilt say unto me,

Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.'

After Judas left the room, our Lord said, 'Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so say I now to you.' The words struck upon Peter's ear, and set his quick spirit working. Another intimation this of some mysterious movement about to be made. Keeping the words before him, so soon as a convenient pause occurred, Peter said unto Jesus, 'Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.' The answer should have satisfied him,—should have repressed at least the curiosity which it was obviously not Christ's purpose to satisfy. But the pertinacious apostle will not accept the

mild rebuke that it contains; he will still go on, be still more urgent. He had already got one check at the feet-washing, from which it cost him little to recover. He may have been somewhat tremulous when with the rest he put the question to Jesus, 'Lord, is it I?' But he has recovered himself, and is ready now to say almost anything to his Master, almost anything of himself. 'Lord,' he replies, 'why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.' Let us do Peter the justice to believe that this was not altogether a vain and empty boast; let us believe that if his Master's life had been threatened by open violence he would have stood by him to the last, and perilled or lost his own life in his defence. He was one of the two who, strangely enough, perhaps suspecting something from the temper of the rulers, had brought a sword with him into the guest-chamber. And he proved in the garden that he was ready to meet the risks that the use of that weapon brought with it. It was in another kind of courage than the physical one that he was to prove himself so bankrupt. Still there was no small measure of presumption

in his being so free with the expression of his readiness to lay down his life, a presumption which Jesus met by saying first, with gentle irony, 'Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?' and then adding, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow' (the time of the cock-crowing, a division of the Jewish night, shall not be past), 'till thou hast denied me thrice.'

The feast goes on. Some unrecorded observation has been made by Peter in the name of the others as well as of himself, when our Lord turns to him and says, 'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you;' to have you all (the word here used took in the others as well as Peter), 'that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,' —another and most impressive warning which should have sent his thoughts into another channel, but he is back again to his first position. Jesus had said nothing open of any peril to himself, but the apostle cannot get it out of his thoughts. 'Lord,' he says, 'I am ready to go with thee to prison and to death.' He gets in answer

the same distinct prediction, that before the dawn he should thrice deny his Lord.

The feast is over. They are on the way out to Gethsemane, when Jesus says to the group around him, 'All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.' There was nothing to call for Peter's intervention here. But he cannot be silent; he must step forward and put himself above all the others. 'Though all shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.' Once more, for the third time, the prediction of his three denials is rung in his ears, but with no effect. 'But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee. Likewise also said they all.' Yet within an hour they all had fled, and within three hours the three denials had taken place. How are we to look upon so singular a display of such sustained, reiterated, most obstinate, and boastful self-confidence? Something we must attribute to the excitement of the occasion, but more to the natural temper of the man. The last few days had been swell-

ing the tide of Pharisaic indignation as it rose around Jesus in the Temple, till its proudest, darkest waves seemed ready to burst upon and swallow him up. New and strange impressions of some great impending calamity, which all their Master's words and actions deepened, seized upon the apostles. There were some quiet hours for him and them in the guest-chamber; but calm as he was there was a mournfulness in their Master's calmness, as if he sat under the shadow of some terrible catastrophe, and such a constant throwing out of hints as to its approach, that one can well believe that the spirits of the apostles were wrought up to a high pitch of excitement, so that whatever each man had in him of weakness or of strength, was just in the condition to come out in all its fulness; and so in all its fulness came out that rash, presumptuous, overtrustfulness in self, in which lay Peter's peculiar weakness.

But something, too, we must attribute to another agency, which took advantage of all the excitement of the occasion, and wrought upon the temper of the man. I have already spoken of the evidence which, within the walls of this

supper-chamber, Jesus gave of his eye being one that could see into the future of earthly events. But now the proof meets us of that eye being one that pierces beyond the bounds of the outward and earthly, scans the secrets of the world of spirits, and sees all that is there going on. It is but a glimpse he gives us of what he knew and saw; but how strange, how awful, how full of warning, how full of encouragement, that glimpse! Looking at the scene in the supper-chamber with the eye of sense, you see twelve men with their Master at their head, in trying, startling circumstances; first one and then another acting out their natural dispositions and characters. Looking with the eye of faith as Jesus lifts the veil, you see Satan tempting, Jesus praying, the Father hearing, the sifting suffered, the son of perdition lost, the boastful disciple tried, his fall permitted, the invisible shield held over him,—his faith not suffered wholly to fail, his very fall turned to good account, and he by it made all the fitter to be a comforter and strengthener of others.

Such was the first communion-table: around it

the play of these spiritual agencies; by the men who sat at it the exhibitions of such weakness, presumption, guilt,—one betraying, one denying, all forsaking. With such a spectacle before our eyes let us not be high-minded, but fear. We come to our tables of communion with the same weak nature that was in Judas, and Peter, and the rest; and Satan may be ready to enter into our heart and may be desirous to have us that he may sift us as wheat. The nearer we stand to Jesus, the greater his efforts to throw the snare around our feet by which our fall may be effected. Let the self-ignorance and want of faith and failure in attachment that all the twelve showed that night shine as a beacon before our eyes, and under a trembling sense of our own weakness and liability to forsake or deny, or even to betray our Master, let us cast ourselves upon him, that for us, too, he may pray the Father, that in the coming hours of trial our faith fail not, but that through all of temptation and danger that yet awaits us in this world we may be safely borne, through the might of his strengthening presence, and to the praise of his great name.

XVII.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.[1]

Thursday.

LET us imagine that one previously ignorant of the history of our religion were to set himself, in the first instance, to investigate the origin of the institution of the Lord's Supper. The fact that the entire Christian Church, however its various sections may otherwise differ, all agree in observing this rite, is before his eyes, and he finds upon inquiry that it has done so for many generations past. Guided simply by the lights of common history, he ascertains that as far back as till about 130 years after the time when Christ is said to have lived, there was a society calling itself by his name, in which this ordinance was kept. There is then put into his hand a copy of the New Testament, in which an account of its first

[1] Matt. xxvi. 26-29; Mark xiv. 22-25; Luke xxii. 19-20; 1st Cor. xi. 23-25.

institution is given. He finds in this book, however, so much that is extraordinary, that he is disposed at first to be incredulous,—incredulous, among other things, as to this account. Might not this rite have taken its rise somewhat differently, at some after period, the narrative contrived and adapted by those who wished to bestow upon it as interesting a birth as possible? A slight reflection resolves this difficulty. How could the men of any after period, say fifty or a hundred years after the death of Christ, begin then for the first time to keep a rite which bore upon the very front of it that it was kept in obedience to a command of the Saviour given on the night before he died? Had this command not been given at that time, and had the observance not at that time commenced, one cannot see how, without a falsehood in their hands which they could not but detect, any body of men could at any posterior period have commenced the celebration. Besides, it is expressly asserted in the Acts of the Apostles that the first disciples of Jesus did actually begin the breaking of bread in remembrance of their Master a few days after the resurrection, and

continued it weekly thereafter. How could a record containing such a statement have been at any subsequent time foisted upon the faith of those who had never before seen or heard of such an ordinance? It would have been utterly impossible to have gained credit for a narrative containing such a statement, had the statement not in point of fact been true.

Simply and by itself, therefore, the continuous observance of this sacred ordinance carries with it a separate and independent proof that it must have commenced at the time specified in the Gospel narrative. Assuming, then, that narrative as authentic, as being a trustworthy account of what was said and done by Jesus Christ within the chamber where he assembled with the twelve, what might such an inquirer as we have imagined gather from that narrative alone, and without going beyond its limits, as to the character of Christ?

1. Would he not be struck with the manifold evidence given within the compass of these few hours of the prescience of Jesus, his minute foreknowledge of the future? All throughout he

speaks and acts as one who knew that this was to be his parting interview with the men around him, his last meeting with them before his death. He knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father. He spoke of that departure as at hand. Externally there was nothing to indicate that his death was so near, that his body was so soon to be broken, his blood to be shed. Such private information might have been conveyed to him as to the plans and purposes of the rulers, and of the compact of the betrayer with them, as to satisfy him that the earliest opportunity would be taken to cut him off. A presentiment that his end was near might thus have been created, but such a presentiment could not have exhibited the clearness and the certainty of that conviction upon which he acted. Besides, it was not his own future alone which was mapped out so distinctly before his eye. It was the future, near and remote, of every man around him. He tells Judas beforehand that he was to betray him, Peter that he was to deny him, the whole of them that they were that night to be offended at him and forsake him, that

he was to be left alone. Looking still further on, he dimly intimates to Peter that in his death he was to resemble his Master, and distinctly tells the rest that for a little while they should be sorrowful, but that their sorrow should be turned into joy; that the time was coming when they should be put out of the synagogues, and that whosoever killed them should think that he did God service. Three times in the course of his addresses, whilst pre-announcing one or another of these events, he emphatically declares that he told them these things beforehand, that when all came to pass they might remember that he had told them, and believe that he was the Messiah promised to their fathers. Pondering over the form and manner of the evidence thus afforded of Christ's prescience, might not our inquirer say, Surely a greater than any of the old prophets is here! Their knowledge of the future was derived from another, was communicated as so derived. It was as the Lord revealed that they declared and described. To their eye there was so much light upon the future as God was pleased to throw upon it, but all around was darkness. They never assumed,

and they never exercised, a power of foreknowing and foretelling in their own name, and without any limits. But here is one upon whom the power sits easily, as a natural inherent gift, who exercises it without token of its being in any way limited, without any recognition of his indebtedness to another for the foresight he displays.

2. Opening his mind and heart to the first impressions of the scene, our inquirer could not fail to be greatly struck with the strong considerate affection shown by Jesus to his disciples. There hangs around the incidents and sayings of the upper chamber the touching and tender interest which attaches to the last words and acts of the dying. When a man knows that he is speaking to his family or friends around him for the last time, that it is his last opportunity of addressing to them words of counsel and encouragement, what a solemnity attaches to the interview! And if he be a man of ardent affections, what love and sympathy will breathe out in his parting words! The world of common life is not void of instances in which men so placed have risen to a heroic height of self-forgetfulness, and

have spent their last moments in the effort to comfort and strengthen those they left behind. There is much, however, to distinguish this instance of a parting farewell from all others of a like kind. It is given to no man to foresee his impending sufferings, and the exact manner of his death, as Jesus foresaw them; nor is it given to any to foresee, as he did, all the after trials of those from whom he was to part. He knows, as he is speaking to the twelve in the guest-chamber, that within an hour or two he shall be lying in the great agony of the garden; that he shall never close his eyes again till he closes them in death; that to-morrow there await him all the mockeries of the judgment-hall, all the shame and suffering of the cross; that the shades of the next day shall darken round his sepulchre. But the prospect of all this, though so near, so vividly seen, so awfully dark, has not power to withdraw his thoughts from his disciples, or keep him from bestowing upon them those last hours given for earthly intercourse. As he speaks to them his whole heart seems absorbed with the one desire, to soothe, to comfort, to warn, to

fortify, to encourage. If he speak of his own departure, it is as if the thing about it that grieved him most was, that they should be left exposed to so many difficulties and trials when he was gone. Their very ignorance of what was awaiting them quickens his compassion and gives deeper pathos to his words. As he looks round upon the little flock so soon to be scattered as sheep without a shepherd, the coming history of each rises before his eye. There is James, who so soon is to seal his testimony with his blood; Peter, who, like his Lord, is to be crucified; John, who is to be left survivor of them all. How little do these men know the kind of life that is before them! How shall he best prepare them for it? The very frailties and faults that he knew they were to exhibit seem but to have added to the gentleness and tenderness of his love. How else shall we account for the manner in which he speaks of them and to them upon this occasion? Of them, to his Father: 'Thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word; they have known surely that I came out from thee, they have believed

that thou didst send me.' To themselves: 'Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.' To speak in such a way as this of men who at the time knew so little of the real character of their Master, and had so little faith; to speak thus of the very men who, instead of continuing with him, were all that very night to forsake him, what shall we say of it but that there was the very rarest exhibition here of that charity which believeth all things, thinketh no evil, hopeth all things; which, wherever faith, though it be but as a grain of mustard-seed, is genuine; wherever devotion, though it be weak, is true,—is ready to acknowledge and approve?

3. After being struck generally with the singular manifestations of a deep-rooted self-forgetting attachment to the twelve shown by Jesus all through this interview, we may imagine the attention of our supposed inquirer to be concentrated upon that act by which he instituted an observance to be kept for ever after in remembrance of him. As the author of a great religious revolu-

tion, the head of a great religious society, it is remarkable that this is the one religious ceremony instituted and observed by our Lord himself. After his death and resurrection, he issued the command that, on being enrolled as his followers, all were to be baptized; but this meeting together, this breaking of bread and drinking of wine in remembrance of him, was the single ordinance that in his lifetime he set up, and by his own first observance hallowed. Is there anything peculiar in his having done so? There is nothing peculiar certainly in the cherishing and expressing a desire to be remembered when we are gone by those we loved; nothing peculiar in our leaving behind some remembrancers by which our memory may be kept green and fresh within their hearts. But there is something more here than the expression of such a desire, the bequeathing of such a remembrancer. There is the appointment of a particular mode by which for ever afterwards the remembrance of Christ, and more particularly of his death for them, was to be sustained in the breasts of all his followers. It is common enough in human history to meet with periodical celebra-

tions, anniversaries of the day of their birth, or of their death, held in honour of those who have greatly distinguished themselves by their virtues, their genius, their high services to their country or to mankind. But where except here have we read of any one in his own lifetime originating and appointing the method by which he was to be remembered, himself presiding at the first celebration of the rite, and laying as his injunction upon all his followers, regularly to meet for its observance? Who among all those who have been the greatest ornaments of our race, the greatest benefactors of humanity, would ever have risked his reputation, his prospect of being remembered by the ages that were to come, by exhibiting such an eager and premature desire to preserve and perpetuate the remembrance of his name, his character, his deeds? They have left it to others after them to devise the means for doing so; neither vain enough, nor bold enough, nor foolish enough to be themselves the framers of these means. Who then is he who ventures to do what none else ever did? Who is this who, ere he dies, by his own act and deed sets up the memorial insti-

tution by which his death is to be shown forth? Surely he must be one who knows and feels that he has claims to be remembered such as none other ever had,—claims of such a kind that, in pressing them in such a way upon the notice of his followers, he has no fear whatever of what he does being attributed to any other, any lesser motive than the purest, deepest, most unselfish love? Does not Jesus Christ in the very act of instituting in his own lifetime this memorial rite, step at once above the level of ordinary humanity, and assert for himself a position toward mankind utterly and absolutely unique?

And if, by the mere fact of Jesus Christ having erected with his own hand the institute by which his name and memory were to be kept alive, the impression might thus, and naturally enough, have been conveyed into the mind of our supposed inquirer, of there being something superhuman about him, would not this impression be sustained and enhanced as he ran his eye over the words which, on this occasion, Christ was represented as having addressed to his disciples? Something surely quite original, belonging to himself alone,

was the way in which he spoke of his relationship to his own disciples, to all mankind, to the Divine Being whom he called his Father. To his own disciples you hear him saying, 'I am the vine, ye are the branches.' 'Abide in me and I in you.' 'Without me ye can do nothing.' 'Because I live, ye shall live also.' 'If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.' As to all men you hear him saying, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.' And as to God, 'He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.' 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.' 'And this is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.' 'All mine are thine, and thine are mine.' 'Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.' Out of those few hours which

Jesus spent with the twelve within the walls of the guest-chamber at Jerusalem, from what he did there, and what he said, how much would there be to awaken in the spirit of such an inquirer as we have imagined, the most intense curiosity as to the real character of him who appears as president in this Passover celebration; how much to carry the conviction home either that he was a vain presumptuous egotist, taking a place among his fellows and before God to which he had no right, or he was other than an ordinary child of Adam, one who stood in quite a different position both to God and to man from that which any one before, or any one since in the history of our race has occupied.

With these remarks upon the general impressions which a first reading of the narrative of all that happened in the guest-chamber might be supposed to make on the mind of an intelligent and candid reader, let us look with our own eyes at the different accounts which have been transmitted to us of the institution of the Lord's Supper. They are four in number. The one first written and published was that of St. Paul, remarkable

not only as coming from one who was not an eye-witness, but who received it by immediate revelation from our Lord himself. Springing from such a peculiar and independent source, its concurrence with those of the three Evangelists is striking and satisfactory; for all the four accounts do thoroughly and substantially agree. There are indeed many verbal differences between them. No two of the narrators put exactly the same words in Christ's lips. We might have expected that if any words of our Lord were to be reported with exact and literal fidelity, they would have been those uttered by him on this occasion. That it is not so is one of the many proofs that it was the general meaning and substance of what Christ said, rather than the exact expressions which he employed, that the sacred writers were instructed to preserve. Three of the four accounts agree in telling us that there was a double blessing or giving of thanks, the first at the breaking of the bread, the second at the giving of the cup. But no record whatever is preserved of the words in which these benedictions or prayers were couched; a silence, not

perhaps without reason, considering that it is in and by the consecration prayer of the priest, regarded as corresponding to these benedictions, that the mysterious change in the elements is by some supposed to be effected. Two of the four accounts agree in telling us that there was an interval—how occupied is not told—between the two acts, that of breaking the bread and handing round the cup; the one taking place while the Supper was in progress, the other not till it was ended. Two also of the four accounts agree in telling us that it was as they were eating, *i.e.*, partaking in the ordinary way of the Paschal supper, that the bread of the new Christian rite was blessed and broken.

It is not possible, indeed, with the broken and imperfect lights that we have here in hand, to have anything like a distinct conception of the exact order of events. It is, however, almost certain, that it was after the Paschal lamb was eaten, and towards the close therefore of the Jewish ordinance, that Christ either interrupted the ordinary course of the feast, or turned that which had been the final distribution of a portion of the unleavened

bread to a new and peculiar use. Anyhow, we may well believe that there was something in our Lord's manner when he took the loaf in hand and lifted up his voice in prayer, and blessed and brake, that closed every lip and fixed on him every eye. The wonder heightened when he said, 'Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.' It may have been, we presume it was, a silent interval which occurred, till the time came for the last cup of the feast, of the cup of blessing, to be handed round. Having blessed it also, he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink ye all of it: for this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'

How, then, we ask ourselves, after having studied as minutely as we can all that has been told us of the first observance of this ordinance, how, at what times, and in what manner, did our Lord intend that it should be celebrated in his Church? The first disciples, the apostles themselves, had to put the same question, and we know something of the way in which they answered it. They could not, of course, connect it

any more, as Christ had done, with the Paschal supper, but, following so far, as they thought, their Lord's example, they did connect it with a social meal; and so full of love were they, so anxious to have the memory of their risen Saviour ever before them, they continued daily breaking the bread from house to house. The associating, however, of the religious rite with a common supper led speedily to abuse. The secular and the social vitiated the spiritual, till, in such a case as that which occurred at Corinth, all the sacredness and awe and tender love with which the bread of this ordinance had at first been broken, were lost amid the tumult of a riotous entertainment, in which some ate as the hungry eat, and in which others were drunken. The strong hand of St. Paul was put forth to check so glaring an outrage on all the decencies of Christian worship. Under his rebuke the churches began to discountenance the practice which had opened the door to this abuse. The social meal, under the name of Agapè, or love-feast, was dissociated altogether from the religious observance. The Lord's Supper ceased

to be a supper. It was celebrated in the morning or mid-day, and not in the evening. The daily changed into the weekly observance, where it long stood; the weekly into the monthly, where it still stands in many churches; the monthly, in some cases, into the yearly, as was long the custom in our own country.

Does not all this teach us how free in this matter the Church has been left by its great Founder,—how little he cared about the form as compared with the spirit in which the memory of his dying love was to be preserved and perpetuated? As to time, and place, and order, and outward circumstance, he left all loose. He framed no directory; he did not even leave behind any example that could be exactly copied. It has been so ordered, both as to the original words and actions of our Lord, and the accounts that we have of them, that all attempts to re-enact, as it were, the scene in the guest-chamber are futile and vain.

Two things, indeed, appear to be essential to a right conception of it. First, that in some way or other we recognise this ordinance as a social

meeting. It is by sitting down at one table, and partaking together of the food spread thereon, that the ties of brotherhood and friendship are, in common life, expressed and maintained. And that all true believers are without distinction and on equal terms, invited to sit down at the tables of the Christian communion, to be partakers of that one bread,—is not this designed to teach them that they form one body, one brotherhood, all whose members should be bound together by the spirit of love and sympathy, and readiness to bear each other's burdens, and to give each other help? The existing state of matters in our large Christian societies, when so many who know nothing of one another associate in this holy ordinance, stands in the way of this being realized. Nevertheless, it ought ever to be regarded as one part of its intention, to impress upon us the unity of the Christian brotherhood, their oneness with one another, and the duties of universal charity which this unity, this oneness, involves.

Still more striking, however, and still more important is it, to notice what the source, and bond, and seal of this union of all true Christians

with one another is, as symbolized and represented in this chief rite of our religion. Christ would unite us to one another by bringing us to the same table, and dividing out to us the same bread and wine. But that bread and wine, what are they? His own body, his own blood; no true union with each other, but by and through such a union with himself as is represented by the image—almost too strong, we might think, and somewhat rude and harsh, yet one of the aptest that could be used—of our taking him and feeding upon him—eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

XVIII.

GETHSEMANE.[1]

Thursday

THE Paschal celebration over and his own Supper instituted, Jesus and his disciples united in singing a hymn. We should like to have known certainly what the words were, in singing which the voices of Jesus and the eleven blended. If, as there is much reason to believe, they were those of the 115th, 116th, 117th, and 118th Psalms, with what singular emotion must our Lord have repeated the verses: 'The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? The

[1] Matt. xxvi. 36-46; Mark xiv. 32-42; Luke xxii. 39-46.

stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.'

The hymn having been sung, and the words recorded in the 14th chapter of the Gospel of St. John having been spoken, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Arise, let us go hence.' At his command they rise and are ready to follow him. But he does not immediately go forth. It grieves him to break up the interview. He will prolong it to the uttermost; give to them the last moments that can be spared. As they cluster round him, he continues his address. At last it closes with these comforting words: 'These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.' So ended that discourse, which, spoken originally to a small and undistinguished company in a rude upper chamber at Jerusalem, has already won for itself an audience vaster and more varied than ever listened to the words of any other speaker upon earth, and which has rendered but a small part of the wide service of instruction and comfort

which it is destined to discharge to the sinful and sorrowful children of our race.

Our Lord's last act of intercourse with his own in the upper chamber was to bear them upon the arms of faith before his Father, in the offering of that sublime intercessory prayer which he has left behind him as a specimen of the advocacy which, as their great High Priest, he conducts for his people before the Throne.

From the room rendered so sacred by all that had been said and done in it, Jesus and the eleven at last depart. It was near midnight, but the full moon lighted them on their way. They passed out of one of the city gates, descended into the valley of Jehoshaphat, crossed the Kedron, and made their way to the garden of Gethsemane,[1] the well-known retreat where Jesus had often lately spent the night; consecrating beforehand the scene of his great agony by

1 However ready to do so, we could not, when in its neighbourhood, persuade ourselves that the traditional is the real Gethsemane. It is too close to the city and too near a road which, at least in Passover times, must have been a very public thoroughfare. Higher up the valley of Jehoshaphat there is a recess in the western slopes of Mount Olivet which seemed to us much more likely to have been the scene of our Lord's agony.

seasons of solitary prayer. At the entrance to this garden Jesus said to his disciples generally, 'Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.' There was nothing strange in his desiring to be alone. He had often before severed himself in like manner from the twelve. But there was something singular in it,—showing that he was looking forward to something more than an ordinary night of solitary rest or prayer,—when, instructing the others to remain where they were, he took Peter, and James, and John along with him farther into the interior of the garden. They had been the three chosen and honoured witnesses of his Transfiguration on the Mount. Was it to behold some new display of his power and glory that they were taken now again apart? Was the Father about to answer the petition so lately offered, and in their presence, to glorify his Son? Were they again to gaze upon their Master clothed in light, shining all over with a brightness that would throw the moonlight which bathed them into shadow? Wondering what was to come, Peter, James, and John follow their Master as he leads them into the recesses of Gethsemane, towards some spot

perhaps which overhanging olive-branches or the swelling hillside shaded, intercepting the moon-beams. Ere they reach that spot he turns to speak to them. There is a great change upon his countenance, but it is into gloom, not into glory. He looks as one 'sore amazed and very heavy,' upon whose spirit the horror of some great darkness, the pressure of some great burden, has fallen. He speaks, but the calmness and serenity which had breathed in every tone of his voice are gone. 'My soul,' he says to them, 'is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' Strange aspect for their Master to wear; strange words for him to speak! They had never seen that countenance so overshadowed. They had never heard him utter such mournful language. What can it be that has wrought so sudden a change? What deep trouble of the soul is it that vents itself in these words? Peter perhaps might have put some question to his Master, but the time is not given him. 'Tarry ye here,' Christ adds, 'and watch with me.' Leaving them in their turn amazed, he withdraws from them about a stone-cast (forty or fifty yards), not so far off but that

they can see, and even hear him. He reaches the shaded spot, he kneels, he falls upon his face, and from the prostrate form the prayer goes up to heaven: 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.' It may have been but a short time that Jesus remained in this posture of prayer. Brief as it was, on rising and returning to where he had left the three disciples, he found them sleeping. Waking them, and singling out Peter, the one of whom this should have been least expected, he says to him, 'Simon, sleepest thou?'[1] After all your late professions of being so willing to follow me to prison and to death, 'what! couldst not thou watch with me one hour?' Then to him and to the others he says, 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' How did the Saviour look, on this his first return from the place of his agony? Was the trouble gone from his countenance? did nothing but the shadow of it remain? The interval must have brought some relief. When he rose from the

[1] Mark xiv. 37.

ground, retraced his steps, bent over his disciples, stirred them up from their slumbers, spoke to them as he did, is it not evident that for the time the current of his thoughts was changed; a temporary calm was spread over his troubled spirit; the inward conflict was not such as that which had cast him on the ground, and drawn from him the prayer to his Father? Again, however, our Lord leaves the three and retires to the same spot. As he reaches it, the heavy agony is again upon his soul, —heavier, if that could be, than before. Again it bows him to the earth; again he prays as before, but now still more earnestly, the inward pressure telling so upon the outward form, that his sweat is 'as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.' The human power to bear, strained to its utmost limits, seems ready to give way. There appears 'an angel from heaven strengthening him.' And now there is a second pause or interval of respite, in which the three are visited a second time, and a second time found sleeping. But he does not waken them as he had done before; or if he does, he does not stay to speak to those whose eyes are heavy, and

who 'wist not what to answer him.' He is content to stand for a moment, bending on them a look of compassion and unutterable love. The call to the struggle comes again. A third time he is on the cold, bare earth; a third time the same words, expressive of the same inward conflict and suffering, go up to heaven. The thrice-repeated prayer is so far answered. The strength is given, the conflict is over. 'Then he cometh to his disciples and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.' Even as he speaks he hears the sound of approaching footsteps, or catches sight of the high priest's band, with the traitor at its head, and so he adds, 'Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.' From face and form and voice and spirit every trace of the inward tumult and agony is gone. Never perhaps in all his life did the Saviour appear in calmer, serener dignity than when he stepped forth to meet the betrayer; nor did the calmness and serenity for a moment forsake him, all through the trial, and the mocking, and the scourging, and

the crowning him with thorns, and the nailing him to the cross. Nor did the soul-conflict and soul-agony return till, from the midst of the darkness that for three hours wrapped the cross, we hear a cry, kindred to those which cleft the midnight air within Gethsemane, 'My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?'

Passing with Jesus from the upper chamber into the garden, one of the first impressions made upon us is that of the suddenness and greatness of the transition. Delivered within the compass of the same hour, what a contrast between the prayers of the one place and of the other,—the one so calm, so serene, so elevated; the others so dark and troubled! Look first at him as, with eyes uplift to heaven, he offers up the one; look at him again as, prostrate on the earth, in garments moist with sweat and blood, he offers up the other. Listen to him as, speaking on a level with the throne itself, he says, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.' Listen to him as, in petitions brief and broken, wrung from a spirit torn with most

intense sorrow, he says, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' What a mighty and mysterious descent from that height above to these depths beneath! And how rapidly described; the transition so quick, with nothing outward to account for it. If it be, as we know it is, a severe trial for our humanity to pass rapidly from one extreme of emotion to another, if the trial be greater the stronger the contrast between the two states of feeling, and the quicker the change takes place—if rapid passage from extreme joy to extreme grief, or the reverse, have been known even to loose the silver cord and break the golden bowl of life,—let us ask ourselves to what a trial, apart from all consideration of the depth or intensity of the emotions themselves, must the humanity of our Lord have been exposed during the last twelve hours before his death, arising from the very suddenness and greatness of those alternations through which he passed.

But wherein did the great sorrow which came upon him in Gethsemane consist? It is inconceivable and inadmissible that it was the prospect of those outward sufferings and that

bodily death which lay between him and the grave in which he was next day to be laid, that agitated to such an extreme degree the spirit of our Saviour, and wrung from him the thrice repeated prayer. Admitting to the fullest extent that our nature shrinks from suffering, recoils from death; that suffering and dying are those strange things 'for which human nature in the beginning was not created;' that the purer, fuller, more perfect that nature is—the more abhorrent to it they must be, and that, consequently, the intensity of the shrinking, the depth of the recoil, would be at its maximum point in the sinless humanity of our Lord,—yet are there overbalancing considerations which forbid the idea that had it been mere ordinary sufferings, such as any other man placed in the same circumstances might have felt, and a mere ordinary death that Jesus had before him, he would or could have shrunk in such a way beneath the prospect. For let us remember, that if, on the one hand, we attribute to Christ every sinless infirmity to which our nature is liable, on the other hand we must attribute to him every virtue,

and that in its highest quality and degree of which that nature is capable, and among these patience and fortitude. Other men have endured as much physical suffering, have passed through as ignominious and as torturing deaths, without the slightest ruffling of spirit, with the calmest and most heroic fortitude, mingling even ecstatic songs of praise with the sounds of the crackling fagots by which their bodies were consumed. Are we to degrade our Saviour beneath the common martyr-level, or believe that a burden that others bore so easily prostrated him in the garden, forced from him those prayers, and wrapped him in that bloody sweat?

It is true indeed that Christ had a clear and perfect vision beforehand of all that he was to endure, such as no other can have, and this may have heightened the power of the dark prospect that lay before him. But such a vision was his from the beginning. Why was it only now, here at Gethsemane, that it so specially and deeply affected him? Besides, his complete and accurate foreknowledge extended beyond the cross, embraced the resurrection and ascension. If in the

foreground there were humiliation, suffering, and death, in the background were exaltation and triumph. Should not the depression produced by the vivid foresight of the one, have been relieved by the hope and joy excited by the as vivid foresight of the other?

Relinquishing the idea that it was the prospect of the physical sufferings of the cross that induced the agony of the garden, it may be thought that this agony was due to the presentiment of that deeper inward woe which wrung with such bitter anguish the spirit of our Lord, from the hidden depths of which there went up the mysterious utterance, 'My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?' But is this likely? With us imagination may swell out some threatening and impending calamity into such false proportions, that we may actually suffer more from the anticipation than from the reality. Could it have been so with Christ? In a mind like his, where all the faculties and feelings of our nature existed in perfect balance, we should naturally expect that the due proportion would be observed between the pressure produced by anticipation and

that produced by the actual event; that the one should be but a shadow of the other. Is it so here? Is the Gethsemane sorrow a mere shadow of the sorrow of the cross? All that is told us of it testifies that under it, whatever it was, the whole power of endurance that was in our Lord's humanity was tried and tested to the very last degree. It was a purely mental anguish, yet such a strain did it exert upon the body that it forced the life-current of the blood out of its accustomed channels, and sent it forth to mingle with the drops of sweat that fell to the ground. It was an agony so intense that three times, with the utmost vehemence of desire, the request went up to heaven, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' We can readily understand that from a quarter of which we shall presently have to speak, our Saviour's spirit might, and did, lie open to an anguish of such a peculiar nature and intensity that it is saying nothing more of him than that he was a man, to say that such strong crying for relief issued from his lips; the vehemence of the desire for this relief offering a gauge and measure of the pressure that pro-

duced it. But we cannot understand, if it were not the actual endurance itself, but only the foresight of it that was operating on him, how he who had all along been looking forward to the decease he was to accomplish at Jerusalem, who was so straitened till it was accomplished, who knew so well that it was for that very end he came into the world,—should at this one time be so moved by the mere prospect of the cup being put into his hand, that he should so vehemently recoil from it, and so ardently desire that it might pass from him.

We feel ourselves shut up to the conclusion that the agony of the garden was inward, unique, mysterious, impossible to fathom; the same in source, the same in ingredients, the same in design, the same in effect with our Lord's spiritual sufferings on the cross; an integral and constituent part of the endurance to which, as our spiritual head and representative, he submitted, and which sprang from our iniquities being laid upon him, in a way and manner that is not open to us to comprehend. 'He bare our sins in his own body on the tree,' offering

there, not merely or mainly his body to the Roman executioner, but his soul in sacrifice to God. Consummated upon the cross, this soul-offering was made also in the garden. Jesus spake of an hour and a cup which became so identified in the minds of the Evangelists, that they are used interchangeably in the narrative of the Passion. The hour and the cup were one, embracing the entire suffering unto death. The hour was on him, and he passed through it; the cup was in his hand, he put it to his lips and drank it equally in the garden and on the cross. In passing through that hour, in drinking that bitter cup, he made the great atonement for our transgressions. Some great obstacle there must have been in the way of our restoration to the Divine favour. Whatever it was, by the obedience unto death of God's dear Son it has been wholly removed. 'Father,' he said, 'if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' If ever from this earth a cry for relief from suffering went up to God to which his ear was open, surely it was this; whom should the Father shield from sorrow if not his own dear Son? Yet the cup did not pass

away. The prayer was answered in the strength to endure being given, but not in the endurance being removed. To that endurance we are to look as furnishing the ground of our forgiveness and acceptance. It has taken every obstruction which our guilt, the holiness and justice of the Divine character, the integrity and majesty of the Divine law, the stability and prosperity of God's great spiritual empire, interposed between us and the immediate and entire blotting out of all our iniquities.

Spread over the whole of our Lord's suffering life, it was condensed in the agony of the garden and the anguish of the cross. But why broken into these two great sections, of which we can scarcely tell which was the larger, or in which the suffering was the more intense? Why but that in the sight of such a sorrow descending upon the Saviour's spirit, in the absence of all inflictions from without,—in the quiet of the garden, in the loneliness of the midnight hour,—before a hand had been laid on him, before thorn had touched his brow, or scourge his back, or nail his hands and feet, we might learn to

separate in our thoughts the mental and spiritual from the bodily sufferings of Christ; to recognise the truth of the saying, that the sufferings of his soul formed the soul of his sufferings.

But while the breaking of the great endurance into these two portions—the one borne in the garden, and the other upon the cross—carries with it this instructive lesson, is nothing to be learned from the subdivision of the former into those three parts which were separated so distinctly from one another? Does this subdivision not carry with it an indication of the perfect voluntariness on Christ's part of the sufferings of Gethsemane? To give them their vicarious and atoning virtue, it was necessary that Christ's sufferings should throughout possess this character. Many things about the time and manner and circumstances of his death were obviously so ordered as to make it evident that he laid down his life of himself, that no man took it from him. Much also about the agony of the garden evinces that it was voluntarily undergone, and might easily, had Christ so willed, have been avoided. Do not those three breaks and pauses,—his taking

up and laying down the cup, his coming to and going from his disciples, correspond best with the idea of the agony being one not laid upon him from without or endured by compulsion, but one which he could and did take on or lay off, into which he entered by an act and effort of thought and will; by the vivid realizing of the spiritual relationship in which he stood to the great world of transgressors; his voluntary susception of their sins?

Apart from any such view of it, let us look at the manner of his dealing with the disciples in the course of his agony. Why did Jesus, in planting the three at the entrance of the garden, say to them, 'Tarry ye here and watch with me'? It may have been, to assign to them the post of watchful sentinels, the duty of guarding him against surprise, of giving him timely notice of approaching danger. He had already distinctly warned them of some impending peril, of a storm that was about to burst on him, of such force and pressure that it would drive every one of them from his side. He had told them that one of themselves was that night to betray him. Although at the

time none but John knew about the traitor, the abrupt departure of Judas must have excited their attention, and John had time and opportunity on their way out to the garden to tell them on what errand he had gone. Jesus knew when he dismissed him that prompt action was needed; and what he did, Judas must have done quickly. He had to go to some of the men with whom he had made his compact, and tell them that he was ready instantly to fulfil it. He knew where Jesus would go. They might seize him there at dead of night, without danger of popular tumult. They had not intended to arrest him during the feast, but the opportunity now offered is too tempting for them to resist. He may be in their hands before day dawn. His trial and condemnation can quickly be despatched. Let instant execution follow, and before the people gather for the morning sacrifice the hated Galilean may be removed. They at once agree with the proposal of the traitor, and as the small company in the upper chamber is breaking up, in another part of the city a larger one is assembling to move under the leadership of the betrayer.

Nothing of this was known to the disciples, yet something might have been suspected. When Jesus placed them at their posts, and bade them watch with him, might they not naturally enough have regarded this as a summons to them to guard his hours of prayer and rest from the approach of the enemy? Nor does the fact that it was the fixed and predetermined purpose of Christ to wait for and voluntarily surrender himself to the high priest's band, militate against the idea that this duty was laid on them. And had they proved true to such a charge,—scattered as they were like outlying pickets, first the three, and then farther off the eight,—had they kept a strict look-out upon the path that led out from the city, each eye searching the shady places, each ear open to catch the sound of approaching footsteps, long ere it reached the spot the betrayer's company might have been detected, the warning given, and a timely flight effected. But the sentinels slept at their posts, till their Master came and roused them with the words, 'Rise, let us be going: behold, he that betrayeth me is at hand.'

Christ's call to watchfulness and prayer was not so much for his sake as for theirs. It was that they might not enter into, so as to be overcome by temptation. Thick-coming and heavy woes were impending over himself,—the arrest, the trial, the condemnation, the crucifixion. He would prepare for all by prayer. When Judas comes he will find his Master just risen from his knees, the fitter thereby to pass in serene composure through all that lay before him. And he knows that trials await his disciples as well as himself: they will have to pass through the shame and the reproach of being recognised as his followers; they will have tests applied to their fidelity needing more strength than they now possess. He bids them watch and pray that the needed strength may be imparted. They neglect the counsel, they waste the precious interval. The betrayer is upon them and their Master; upon him fresh from prayer, upon them all unprepared, roused from their heavy sleep.

In our lesser sorrows we throw ourselves upon the sympathy of others; in our greater we seek solitude and wrap ourselves in silence. The soli-

tude breeds selfishness. In bearing our heavy burdens we are apt to become self-engrossed and careless about others. How did the Saviour act in the hour of his so bitter grief? The strong instinct of humanity was upon him, and he would be alone, yet not alone. Had absolute solitude been sought for, he would have planted the whole eleven at the entrance into Gethsemane, and himself gone so far into the interior that no human eye had been on him, no earthly witness near. In taking Peter, and James, and John, so far along with him, and placing them where they may have seen and heard, does not a craving for human sympathy reveal itself? He will not have them close beside him when the mysterious agony is experienced. Into it, from its nature as well as from its depth, he knows they cannot enter. But he would have them near, looking on at a distance, following him with such broken sympathy as they can give. It will be a solace and a support to him; and had they watched and given him the sympathy he craved, no angel from heaven might have been needed; theirs might have been the honour and the happiness of

strengthening him in the hour of weakness. But whatever solace or support they might have given was withheld. They sleep on all the time, roused but for a moment to relapse into repose. And when he comes to them at last, is there not something like mournful irony and reproach in his words, 'Sleep on now, and take your rest'? The time for watching, praying, sympathizing is past; no longer can your sleeping do any harm, your watching do any good. The opportunity is for ever gone, the good is irrecoverably lost, the evil irreparably done.

It does not so much surprise us that at the first Peter, and James, and John should have fallen asleep. It had been a long, exciting evening, and by the strange sorrow that had filled their breasts they were weakened for watchfulness. But that after the first visit and the pointed rebuke, Christ should come a second and a third time and find them sleeping still, it needed his own Divine compassion to forgive and overlook. His comings and goings, his mingling of these repeated visits to the disciples with the great atoning grief, how high in our esteem should this

raise our Lord and Saviour; how near to our hearts should it bring him!

And ere we leave Gethsemane, let a parting thought be bestowed on the great example Christ has left us of the spirit in which all heavy trials and sorrows should be met and borne. A stone-cast measured the distance in the garden which separated him from the nearest of his followers; but who shall measure for us that distance in the spiritual world which then separated the Man of Sorrows from every other sufferer of our race? His outward separation and solitude, how imperfect an emblem of the inner solitude of his soul! From the depths of that lonely agony do we not hear a voice saying to us, 'Behold! and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow'? But though so far removed from us, there is a sense in which we must have fellowship with this suffering of Christ, must drink of the same cup, and be baptized with the same baptism. With us also there come times when all the strength we have is strained to the uttermost and is ready to give way. There are Gethsemanes in the followers' as in the Master's life.

When they come, let us look at and try to copy his example. Being in agony, he prayed simply, earnestly, repeatedly, using the same words again and again. Is any cup of more than usual bitterness put into our hands, let us too pray in the same spirit and in the same manner. He mingled care and thought for others with his own intensest sorrow. In his weakness he accepted an angel's help. Let not the heaviest grief that ever comes upon us shut our heart to gentle pity. And whoever they be that come to sympathize with and to help us, let us count them as angels sent from heaven, and give them an angel's welcome. 'Let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.'— It was not sinful in him to desire relief from poignant grief, nor is it so in us. But with us as with him, let the desire for relief mingle with and be lost in the spirit of an entire submission to the will of our Father in heaven.

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